

Cotton Club Bakery Competition

Culinary Students Concoct Petit Fours and Chocolate Creations for JA Event

BY LYNN PEITHMAN STOCK • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON LEIDY



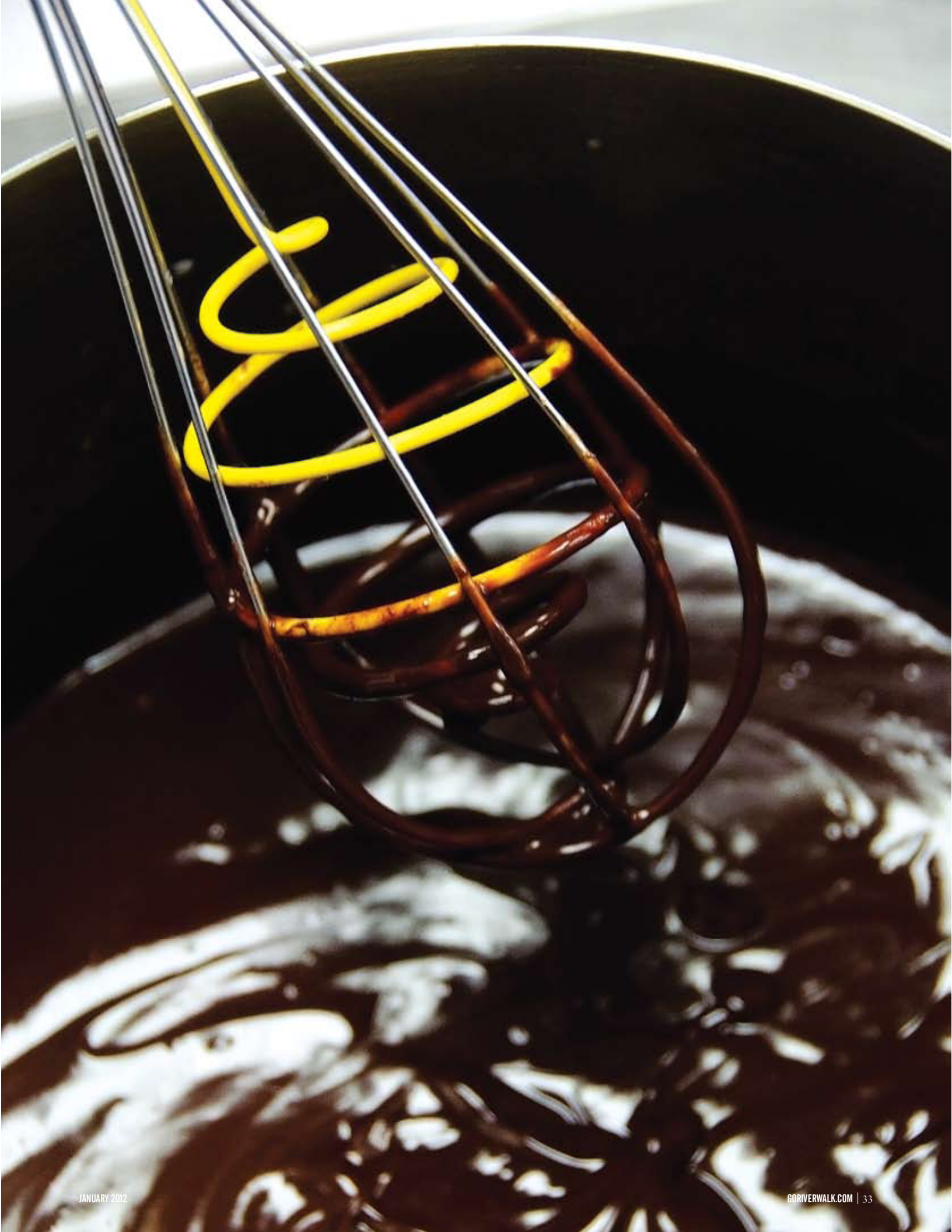
James Schardin,
Leticia Saldaña,
Nicole Hanak,
Lauren Teperman,
Christopher Fread,
Michelle Gay and
Allison Weiler

Two weeks before Christmas, seven elves scurried around the pastry kitchen at the **International Culinary School** at The Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale. They prepared fig-filled **cheesecakes** and pear **petit fours** and **chocolate balls**, all hoping to be chosen to serve their creations to 500 guests at **JA World Uncorked! II** event in January.

The lure of cash **scholarships** lurked in the background, too, and on Jan. 21, five of the culinary students will learn how much money their **delectable bites** have earned them.

This was the **Cotton Club Bakery Competition**, hosted by Uncorked media sponsor **Go Riverwalk Magazine**. We invited culinary students at the **Art Institute** to each prepare a **chocolate dessert** and **petit four** sample for the contest. Judges included **Eugenia Duncan Ellis**, president and CEO of Riverwalk Trust, **Chef Erik Mathes** of Kitchen Coach, and myself.

From Banana Pie Bites to Rum Runner Key Lime Tarts to Capone's Valentine petit four, we tasted them all. Oh, what a





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chore it was to taste 14 different samples. And **different** they were. Each student came up with unusual combinations, presentations and machinations.

The top five finalists are **Christopher Fread, Nicole Hanak, Leticia Saldaña, James Schardin** and **Allison Weiler**. Placements will be announced at the Uncorked event on Jan. 21 at **JA World** in Coconut Creek. They will be judged on their bakery table/set up/desserts/overall presentation on the night of the event.

The first place scholarship winner will receive \$1,000, second place will receive \$500 and the third, fourth and fifth place winners will receive \$250 each. The other two Cotton Club Bakery Competition student chefs, Lauren Teperman and Michelle Gay, will prepare goodies for a tasty dinner to be auctioned off that evening.

Several of the students got **creative** with the recipe names to complement a **speakeasy** setting, which is the Uncorked event’s theme this year.

Allison Weiler looked into South Florida’s checkered past with liquor. For her **Smuggled Jamaican Rum Barrels**, “I designed this recipe after researching how people illegally consumed and held



JA World Uncorked! II
Presented by Southern Wine and Spirits of Florida
Jan. 21 • 6:30 p.m.

Tickets are available at www.goriverwalk.com.

This Circle of Wise Women Signature Event combines food, wine, spirits, craft beers and desserts in a swanky, speakeasy-themed setting. This second-annual event benefits the educational programs at Junior Achievement of South Florida. From 6:30 to 10:30 p.m., guests will stroll through JA World enjoying

bites, wines and desserts from a multitude of local restaurants and international wineries. South Florida’s favorite chefs will whip up culinary creations in signature cooking demonstrations, and the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale’s culinary students will compete for a scholarship in the Cotton Club Bakery Competition presented by Go Riverwalk Magazine and sponsor Diâne Johnson.

JA World Huizenga Center at Broward College
1130 Coconut Creek Blvd.
Coconut Creek
www.jaworlduncorked.com



liquor during Prohibition. I discovered that, aside from moonshine, a lot of liquors were imported from South America and the Caribbean. As a Floridian, I stuck with the Caribbean as my theme. The barrel concept comes from the procedure, in which liquor was smuggled."

Allison's "rum barrels" are oblong shaped white chocolate confections coated with graham cracker crumbs and ground almonds. Mini pipettes filled with coconut rum reduction top off the barrels. Her recipe adds, "Insert tip of pipettes into top of chocolate barrels to resemble bubbler on top of fermentation barrel."

Nicole Hanak created **Sidcar** — Cointreau and Cognac ganache filled chocolates. She is now pursuing her dream of becoming a pastry chef after working for ten years in the mortgage industry.

Matriarchal ancestors influenced the culinary paths of both James Schardin and Christopher Fread. "When I bake, I can feel my great-grandmother beside me," James wrote in his bio. "My mother always said Nana would be proud to see how I work in the kitchen. I never want to lose the feeling that she is watching over me."

During the competition, **Chef Peter Babcock** kept the students on task, periodically reminding them how much time they had left in their four-hour window of mixing, baking and molding. **Chef Jack Kane** and **Chef Andrew Lyman** from the Art Institute lent much-needed support and words of encouragement.

No matter which culinary concoctions will win scholarships for their creators, each of the student chefs demonstrated **creativity**, **passion** and an intense **focus** on their craft. Join us on Jan. 21 to taste their skills. **60**

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