

## THE TASTE TEAM



**Katrina Leath-erwood** just graduated from the University of Cincinnati's culinary program, and was captain of the culinary team this year and last, when it won the national championship. She's a graduate of the Midwest Culinary Institute at Cincinnati State and lives in Delhi Township.



**Lisa Sanders** has served as adviser to the culinary team for two years. She works as culinary applications manager for Flavor System's International Inc. in West Chester Township and lives in Cheviot.



**Christian Serrato** received degrees in the culinary arts and hospitality management from Sinclair Community College in Dayton and is a culinary pre-junior. He grew up in Monterey, Mexico, and lives in Finneytown.



**Grace Yek** is a visiting assistant professor at UC and chef-instructor at the Midwest Culinary Institute. A native of Penang, Malaysia, she is trained as a chemical engineer and certified as a chef. She lives in Columbus and works in the culinary field.

### Fettuccine Alfredo's Roman history

Fettuccine Alfredo is one of those dishes that might be more American than Italian. According to legend, a Rome restaurateur named Alfredo di Leo invented the dish in 1914 as a variation of the classic, *fettuccine al burro* (fettuccine with butter). He tossed hot pasta with butter, Parmesan and heavy cream and named the creation for himself. American movie stars Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks fell in love with the dish while honeymooning in Rome in 1927, and its popularity spread to the United States. In this country, the sauce usually is made separately and mixed with the pasta. But in Italy, where dishes called "Alfredo" are still rare, the sauce and pasta are mixed together in the same bowl, as its creator first did.

### Alfredo is not health food

Considering an Alfredo dish is based on butter, cheese and cream, it should be no surprise most of these convenience products are not low in fat, calories or sodium. The worst offender in our test is the Marie Callender's meal, which packs 620 calories, 36 grams of fat and 1,000 milligrams of sodium. By comparison, a McDonald's Quarter Pounder contains 510 calories, 26 fat grams and 1,190 milligrams of sodium. True to its name, the Healthy Choice Chicken Alfredo is the best overall in terms of nutrition, with 300 calories, 5 grams of fat and 430 milligrams of sodium. But, perhaps that relatively low sodium content is why several panelists said the meal "needed salt."

### About culinology

Students in the University of Cincinnati's culinology program receive their associate's degree in culinary arts from Cincinnati State (or from another institution), and then complete their bachelor of science degree in the culinary arts and sciences at the University of Cincinnati. UC's program is one of eight accredited culinology programs in the United States. (Thanks to the Midwest Culinary Institute at Cincinnati State and adjunct instructor Ruth Ann Kanitz for providing facilities for our test.)

## LIFE

### COVER STORY

# Taste team stirs up new trends



Enquirer file

By **Chuck Martin** / [cmartin@enquirer.com](mailto:cmartin@enquirer.com)

Aside from showing the Lean Cuisine Alfredo meal was the unanimous favorite, the taste test results reveal two trends. First, except for the winner, the team prefers their convenience meals "out of the box." The products tied for second in the test — Birds Eye Voila! and Stouffer's Skillet — were both packaged in bags. Since these meals were designed to feed two, they generally also cost less per ounce than the boxed ones.

The other, more surprising trend was that the only two refrigerated products — Kroger "Fresh for You" and Harry's Healthy Bistro — finished last in the taste test. These meals cost more than most of the other products, so frozen may be the better buy. At least according to this taste team.

All of the meals were prepared according to package directions in a microwave. The taste team sampled each blindly, rating taste, texture and appearance on a 1 to 5 scale (1 = worst; 5 = best).

	<b>Avg. Score (1-5)</b>	<b>Price (per ounce)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>1. Lean Cuisine</b>	4.3	25 cents	"Real" chicken flavor. Chicken is tender and has slight roasted notes. Sauce amount just right.
<b>2. (tie) Birds Eye Voila! (bag)</b>	3.7	17 cents	Colorful appearance. Chicken has good flavor. Sauce not cheesy enough.
<b>2. (tie) Stouffer's "Skillet" (bag)</b>	3.7	19 cents	Like the penne instead of fettuccine. Good flavor, visually attractive. No cheese flavor.
<b>4. Marie Callender's</b>	3.3	22 cents	Nice sauce to chicken ratio. Red peppers over powering. No cheese flavor.
<b>5. Michelina's</b>	3.2	10 cents	Chicken dry, sauce gritty. Not enough cheese flavor. Broccoli texture uneven.
<b>6. (tie) Michael Angelo's</b>	2.8	44 cents	Blue cheese notes, but no Parmesan. Pasta slightly underdone. Chicken is dry.
<b>6. (tie) Healthy Choice</b>	2.8	24 cents	Lacks flavor. Chicken is spongy; tastes reconstituted. Needs salt.
<b>8. Stouffer's</b>	2.6	32 cents	Chicken has rubbery, processed texture. Creamy sauce, but not enough cheese. Needs salt.
<b>9. Kroger "Fresh for You" (refrigerated)</b>	2.0	36 cents	Chicken tastes artificial. Pasta very starchy. No cheese flavor.
<b>10. Harry's Healthy Bistro (refrigerated)</b>	1.1	30 cents	Very soupy. Chicken spongy. Too much garlic.