

Exchange student wins Junior division

Although Junior finalist Mariana Brasil protested that her English wasn't that great, the Brazilian exchange student barely missed a beat during The Daily Star's 48th annual cook-off at the State University College at Oneonta.

With her host family there to cheer her on, the 18-year-old Oneonta High School senior cooked her way to a first-place finish with her Pasta a la Vovo.

"The recipe is my grandmother's — 'vovo' is 'Grandma' in Portuguese," Brasil explained as she prepared her work space before getting started.

"I made (the dish) for the first time here — I had to call my grandmother to get the instructions — but I like to cook a lot."

Brasil, who said she is considering studying foods when she returns to her native country for college, didn't let any language barriers stand in her way during the cook-off. Even when fielding rapid-fire questions from judge Joe Poon, the young woman kept her poise.

Working with two burners at once, Brasil let her tomato sauce simmer while constantly stirring a smaller saucepan of cream sauce. "Why do you keep stirring?" Poon asked.

"So it doesn't make clumps," Brasil responded without missing a beat.

Once the pot was ready to leave the burner, Brasil prepared to add her sour cream, drawing another question from Poon about why the key ingredient hadn't been added earlier.

Hesitating briefly, Brasil admitted, "I know the answer in Portuguese, but not in English," which made Poon smile.

Host mother Ann Adamo was impressed with Brasil's performance, not only during the cook-off, but before as well.

"She was extremely organized — she got up early today and went right into the kitchen, she thought through how she was going to do everything, and I think she did a really great job," Adamo said, adding that Brasil had served her winning dish to the family before.

Adamo's daughters Meredith, 18, and Adrian, 14, were at the cook-off as well, cheering on their host sister and helping her dish up the savory pasta to feed the hungry audi-



Mariana Brasil stirs cream sauce for her Pasta a la Vovo.

ence.

"She's very creative" in the kitchen, Adamo said. "I'll ask her, 'Where did this recipe come from?' and she'll say, 'Oh, I just made it up!'"

Adamo and her husband, Paul, are the second of three families to host Brasil during her year-long stay in the

States.

Brasil said she's found at least one new food she enjoys: bagels.

"They are really good," Brasil said, "but unfortunately we don't have those in Brazil."

For her first-place prize, Brasil received a KitchenAid stand mixer.

FIRST PLACE — JUNIOR

PASTA A LA VOVO

Mariana Brasil
Oneonta

Ingredients:

- 1 pound spaghetti
- 2 tablespoons butter
- ½ cup chopped onions, divided
- 2¼ cups milk
- ¼ teaspoon salt, divided
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 mushroom
- 2 tablespoons oil, divided
- 1½ cup ground beef
- pinch of black pepper
- 2½ cup tomato sauce
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon oregano
- ½ cup mozzarella
- ½ cup Parmesan

Directions: Cook spaghetti following the directions on the box. Drain and set aside.

Melt the butter in a 2-quart saucepan. Add ¼ cup onion and saute until soft.

Add milk and salt, and bring to a boil. Add flour to the milk mixture, stirring constantly until thickened. Remove from heat and stir in sour cream and mushrooms.

In a pan, put 1 tablespoon of oil and ¼ cup onion. Cook until soft and add ground beef, black pepper and ½ teaspoon salt. Cook until meat is done.

In another pan, add remaining oil, tomato sauce, sugar and oregano. Bring this mixture to a boil and add cooked ground beef. Set aside.

Preheat oven to 350 F. Mix spaghetti and white sauce and place in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Pour tomato sauce evenly over the top, but do not mix.

Sprinkle cheeses on top of tomato sauce and bake for 7 minutes or until cheese is melted and pasta is warm.

Suggestion: Serve with dry red wine.

JUNIOR RECIPES

ZUCCHINI BREAD

Kenneth Knickerbocker
Sherburne

Ingredients:

- 3 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 3 large eggs
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup Crisco
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

3 cups zucchini, peeled and grated

Directions: Hand-beat eggs, sugar and Crisco until light. Add vanilla and zucchini.

Sift dry ingredients and add to wet mixture. Stir until just mixed. Do not over-beat.

Divide into 2 standard bread pans, greased, with wax paper on bottom. Bake at 350 F for 50 minutes to 1 hour. Immediately remove from pans and cool on rack.

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