

Cooking with a purpose

Students use cooking to eat meat-free and connect with family

BY DAVID HUTCHINSON
Staff Reporter

For some students, food is about more than simple nutrition. Cooking can mean finding connection to their families or even tailoring meals to their own dietary preferences.

Family based cooking

If junior Blair Ballard had six hours to spare, she said would use them to make her favorite dish, tamales, for her and her roommates. Ballard said she loves spicy food, so she marinates the beef in traditional chili seasoning for a few hours before she makes the tamales. Rather than use six hours of her limited time, Ballard settles for another favorite recipe — white chicken enchiladas, requiring less than two hours of preparation, made from scratch and perfected by her grandmother.

Students like Ballard use cooking as a way to remind them of family while bringing them close to friends at their homes away from home.

Ballard said she began cooking when she was about 10-years-old, after watching her Hispanic mother prepare traditional Mexican food. After Ballard expressed her interest in cooking, her mother taught her and her three brothers cooking basics. Ballard and her brothers soon took control of meal preparation, but she said the family still remained the main focus.

"I'm really close with my parents and my brothers," Ballard said. "Every Sunday, no matter what, everyone spent almost the entire afternoon in the kitchen, and I feel that's where I really got to know my [family]."

Now, when Ballard prepares family recipes like the white chicken enchiladas in her apartment off-campus, she said it's a reminder of her home and family.



Rose Sparks/Index

Junior Blair Ballard prepares caramelized carrots as part of a vegetarian meal for friends Monday in her off-campus apartment. Ballard enjoys cooking family recipes for herself and friends.

Freshman Norma Castro also likes to cook Hispanic food and said cooking has helped her become closer to friends by bringing them together for Sunday dinners.

Castro said her mother taught her to cook when she was 16-years-old, but without using measurements and instead relying on her mother's kitchen experience. Castro's newfound cooking skills were useful the days when she arrived at home earlier than her mother and

needed to prepare dinner for her and brothers.

She and her friends in Dobson Hall frequently gather during Sunday evenings for a family dinner. Castro said she usually prepares food like taquitos or guacamole — meals that are simple to prepare, yet delicious and filling. Keeping with simplicity, Mexican rice is a staple in Castro's diet. Castro said it is one her favorite dishes her mother makes. It's easy to make on campus because

it requires only a few ingredients like whole tomatoes and onions.

Vegetarian and vegan cooking

With just a block of tofu, junior Brittany Newton's meal options seem limitless. When cooked, the soft, white hunk of protein-packed processed soy absorbs the flavor of what it is cooked in.

"You're only as limited as your spices," Newton said.

Newton hasn't eaten meat in nearly 10 years. She is not frail and

malnourished as some might expect. Some vegetarians and vegans, like Newton, maintain healthy diets by preparing their own meals and finding ways to include protein into their diets.

Newton became a vegetarian because of a medical condition that makes breaking down certain proteins nearly impossible for her. Originally, she only experienced problems with red meat, but they soon extended to poultry and fish, and this led her to give up meat altogether, she said. Three years ago, dairy products and eggs began causing problems, too, so Newton became a vegan and now does not eat any animal products.

About once a week, Newton said she uses her residence halls' kitchens to prepare a vegan meal. She said her most often cooked meals are Asian and Mexican dishes, because it is easy to substitute meat with tofu in the recipe. Stir-fry has become a staple of Newton's diet because of the short preparation time and the variety of flavors she can add. Newton said she usually spends about 15 minutes preparing her dishes — boiling water and waiting for the rice or noodles to soften — and she can feed her friends if they want to try it.

Junior Danielle Meinhardt began the academic year as vegetarian, but recently has been phasing into veganism. Ethical questions propelled her to research the lifestyle. She found environmental, health and political reasons to become a vegetarian as well. Meinhardt said she sees veganism as a further extension of those beliefs. Like Newton, pasta and tofu are her most frequently cooked meals because of the protein and carbohydrates they provide, she said. Meinhardt's favorite dish is a black bean sweet potato taco.

"I know it sounds disgusting," she said. "But it's really good!"

The black beans remind her of a regular taco, she said, but the sweet potatoes add an exotic flavor that can't be beat.

Alumnus wins dream job

BY SCOTT HENSON
Staff Reporter

Truman State alumnus Alex Halfmann wore only red Cardinals attire entering a crowded bar near Busch Stadium in downtown St. Louis to pursue the career opportunity of a lifetime.

Halfmann auditioned during February with about 200 other hopefuls to become KMOX radio's spring training correspondent for the St. Louis Cardinals. The three-day all-expenses-paid trip to Jupiter, Fla. lasted from March 18 to 22, giving Halfmann the opportunity to network with sports professionals and live out one of his childhood dreams.

Sports journalism has been a part of Halfmann's life long before his spring training experience in Jupiter. Halfmann said his family kept tapes of famous Cardinals highlights while he was growing up, including radio broadcaster Jack Buck's call of "Go crazy, folks! Go crazy!" following Ozzie Smith's home run during the 1985 National League Championship Series.

"I used to listen to that all the time as a kid, and that's where I started idolizing [Buck]," Halfmann said. "That was my favorite thing to listen to when I was real little."

Halfmann's father Mark has worked for KMOV, a CBS affiliate television station in St. Louis, for about 25 years. When Alex was younger, Mark said he would allow him to help him rewind tapes at the studio, located near Busch Stadium, after the family attended Cardinals games.

Mark said Alex got his first glimpse into the world of sports broadcasting while hanging out at the studio. From rewinding tapes to interviewing Cardinals Manager Mike Matheny at spring training, Mark said Alex has come a long way toward living out a lifelong dream.

"In my experience, a huge percent of 20-something-year-old males would either like to be athletes or would like to be broadcasters," Mark said. "He's just a lot closer to it than a lot of them."

Halfmann discovered the opportunity to cover spring training on Twitter during January. After he found out he was one of KMOX's 10 finalists for the contest during February, he enlisted his friends, family and colleagues to vote for him on the station's website, using tweets, retweets and a Facebook group to generate support.

The phone call from KMOX finally came Feb. 25, while Halfmann sat in his living room. On the line was KMOX Sports Director Tom Ackerman, telling Halfmann that he had won the contest. His parents, meanwhile, listened to the announcement from the phone line in the other room.

"I'm a huge Cardinals fan, so I was stoked about that: going to hang out with the players and watch the team,"



Submitted photos by KMOX/Tom Ackerman

Truman alumnus Alex Halfmann interviews David Freeze as a part of his job with KMOX radio station. In March Halfmann spent three days covering the St. Louis Cardinals training camp in Jupiter, Fla.

Halfmann said. "... I guess what was going through my head was a nice little sigh of relief, like 'Yes, I won.'"

While he was at Jupiter, Halfmann put together recorded radio stories, wrote blogs, gathered post-game interviews and watched practices. He said the experience was very "low key" and not necessarily what one might expect from the fast-paced world of sports journalism.

Halfmann had been familiar with sports journalism prior to his reporting experience in Florida. He graduated from Truman with a journalism emphasis in his communication major, and worked as a reporter for KTVO in Iowa afterward.

Ackerman, the KMOX sports director with whom Halfmann reported during his time in Jupiter, said Halfmann's background in journalism made him the ideal spring training correspondent. For Ackerman, watching Halfmann report was like experiencing his rookie days as a sports journalist all over again.

"I'm 36, I started at KMOX when I was 22," Ackerman said. "[Seeing Alex work] took me back a little bit to what that was like: to first cover a spring training, to first cover the Cardinals. ... I was watching him experience that and really enjoyed that because I thought back to my own experiences, and how exciting that was."

While in Jupiter, Halfmann interviewed Alan Craig, Mitchell Boggs, Tyler Greene and David Freeze, jokingly asking Freeze about the most creative marriage proposal he received after becoming last year's World Series MVP. His favorite moment of the trip, though, was a five-minute conversation he had with Lou Brock, a Baseball Hall-of-Famer and former Cardinals left fielder.

"He just kind of stopped and was asking me questions about why I was down there and just making sure I was having a good time," he said. "It was



kind of cool to have him take the time out [to talk to me]."

Alex said the biggest challenge he encountered while reporting was that the three-day trip didn't allow him enough time to pack in all of the stories he would have liked to cover. Despite being jam-packed, though, Alex said he still had time to meet with media professionals who told him to send them his resume and match faces to the names of reporters whose by-lines he reads daily.

As he recovers from his Florida sunburns, he said he is looking to start a career in which he will be happy, whether that involves broadcasting or not. Ackerman, however, thinks Alex's time in Jupiter could prove to be the key to many future doors in his journalistic career.

"If he wanted to get into journalism and he wanted to pursue broadcasting ... I told him, 'Make sure you include on your resume that you worked at KMOX and spring training for a couple days, and oh yeah, you interviewed the World Series MVP,'" Ackerman said. "That's a pretty good start."

Exterminator battles bats

Bat control expert rides Kirksville residences of bats

BY ALEX CARLSON
Staff Reporter

When the summer begins and dusk strikes, the restless rodents of the sky will begin to take flight and find new places to settle and breed. With a loud screech and a flap of their leathery wings, bats scour the Kirksville area for new homes. But the bats are not alone. One man's own style of animal control has earned him praise from Kirksville residents who need their houses and apartments free of unwanted bats.

Based in Cantril, Iowa, Curvin Martin of Martin Brothers Bat Proofing is a bat control expert with 12 years of experience, but his careful technique make it so bats and humans benefit from the process.

Martin always had a desire to help his community during his early career, especially when it came to helping people and animals. After seeing an advertisement for an animal control apprenticeship in Wisconsin 12 years ago, Martin applied. He quickly discovered that the apprenticeship was focused on bat control specifically, which would later become his animal control specialty.

"If the ad was for another type of animal control, I would've gone into something else entirely," Martin said. "Since then, I've learned the specific skills for bat control. Taking care of a mouse or bird problem sometimes overlaps with my field, and I will get occasional calls for that, but the skills I learned in Wisconsin are tailor-made for bat control."

Martin's method of bat removal is a widely-used tactic recalled excluding. With excluding, Martin doesn't harm or kill the bats. Instead, he seals all entrances and exits in the building except for one with wall-sealant caulk or wire screen. This entrance is used to install a special tube that lets the bat exit but not re-enter the building. The tube is left installed for a few days

until the bat departs from the building, while the progress is relayed to Martin by his clients by phone.

Because of this method, Martin has never been bitten by a bat. However, he said wearing leather gloves is essential because bats will bite when they get cornered or feel threatened.

Kirksville resident David Mills is a housing development business owner and needs to examine and design houses to be sold. Mills has had to deal with unwanted animals in the houses he builds and designs, but removing bats from a building is a bigger issue than removing mice or birds due to bats' collapsible size.

"Bats and squirrels will sometimes dig in the side of a house," Mills said. "They are notorious for chewing up wood and bats can get through those holes that they make. A bat can crawl in a hole as tiny as a dime since their wings fold up, so they can get into a building very easily."

Mills heard of Martin's work from a friend at Home Depot, and after seeing Martin's technique in action, he has called Martin and asked for his bat removal services on multiple occasions. Mills said he recommends Martin's work and owes some of his business's success to Martin.

"As the landlord, you need to take care of the bat problem as quick as you can," Mills said. "I've had college kids call me late at night because they saw a bat in their house. Curvin himself, he's efficient. You just call and he'll be there as quick as possible. Bats even give me the heebie-jeebies and I've been working with them for years now, so Curvin has been a big help for me."

Martin said helping the average citizen is just as rewarding and crucial to his profession. History professor Jeff Gall contacted Martin to take care of a bat issue during summer 2010. After seeing a bat in his bedroom, Gall called Martin because he had hired him for a previous bat problem at a rental property.

See the full story online at trumanindex.com.