

Chef gives Rivier students a taste of German cuisine

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Filling a German pancake with fruit, chef Falk Fehlhaber of Germany does a cooking demonstration Wednesday in front of Afea Dwumfour, left, and Jenn Blanchard at Rivier College in Nashua. The visiting chef was in town and cooked lunch and dinner at the school.

German chef Falk Fehlhaber uses only the freshest ingredients to make traditional German dishes. He said a regular Sunday meal in Germany could take hours to prepare, but it is healthier than the on-the-go, ready-mixed meals Americans are accustomed to.

"In Germany, it is necessary to give a healthy component to the meal," Fehlhaber said.

As part of the Global Chefs program, Fehlhaber has been asked on a tour of New England colleges, starting with an appearance at Rivier College in Nashua.

Fehlhaber cooked in front of students, faculty and staff at Rivier's dining hall in the Dion Center on Wednesday and Thursday.

He demonstrated the preparation of entrees and desserts that are considered conventions in German dining.

One entree was a light-tasting spinach gratin served up for Wednesday's lunch, made with spinach, chicken and cheese on a bed of tagliatelle pasta.

Fehlhaber said Germans cook food in a different way, but with the same ingredients used in American food. The major difference is a typical German meal has less sugar than American food and is made with all fresh ingredients.

Despite his aim to bring real German cuisine to American students, Fehlhaber admits he adjusted some of the recipes to fit his college patrons.

"I tried to find the right mix for students here in the U.S. Their habits are very different," he said.

For dessert on Wednesday, Fehlhaber made German pancakes, which are thinner than American pancakes and cook in about two minutes.

He used a simple combination of eggs, flour, milk and a minimal amount of sugar to make the pancakes. He then folded each of them around a heaping spoonful of a mix of apples, strawberries and mandarin oranges.

The chef planned to prepare a typical German Sunday meal for dinner on Wednesday which, in Germany, is called "rinder rouladen." It translates to beef olives in English, Fehlhaber said.

Stuffing a thick slice of beef with bacon, onions, mustard and pickled Gherkins makes the dish, he said.

Fehlhaber was supervisor in the German Army, a career that ran concurrently with his completion of a business administration degree from the Military Academy in Hamburg. In Rostock, Germany, he managed his own catering company.

According to District Chef Gary Symolon from Sodexo, Inc., the worldwide food services company that provides dining services at Rivier and more than 900 other colleges nationwide, Global Chefs is a cultural exchange program that brings chefs here from abroad and sends chefs from here abroad. Fehlhaber is an executive chef for Sodexo in Germany.

Symolon, who assists Fehlhaber's culinary endeavors for the tour, said the campus response was overwhelming.

"A lot of people that have never been exposed to German cooking were surprised," he said.