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## **Mother, daughter win numerous baking contests**

**By: Kerry Heeran , Herald Staff**

NEW BRITAIN - Theresa Olchanowski always had a passion for cooking since her childhood, but life took her in a different direction after she graduated from high school. She started a family working full time for a company in Kensington.

"When the company that I was working for closed, I knew I had to do something else," said Olchanowski.

"This was my only chance to pursue my dreams as a cook."

Theresa and her 21-year-old daughter, Amy Olchanowski, both enrolled in Manchester Community College for their associate's degrees in food service. Together the pair started competing in statewide competitions.

Theresa won first place in a cooking contest at the Culinary Institute in Hartford last week. Theresa and her five teammates were instructed to prepare a multiple-course meal from scratch, using lamb and shrimp as the main dish.

Theresa and Amy, both of New Britain, took their first decorating class about six years ago at New Britain High School. Their cake decorating entries won first place at the Connecticut Restaurant Show in October. "My daughter and I were both shocked that we placed first, we both didn't expect it," Theresa said. Theresa, who spent over 25 hours on her creation, won first place in the advanced cake decorating competition created a "Coffee for Two" cake design. She used gum paste and royal icing to make a coffee pot, sugar bowl, two cup cakes, a creamer and napkins.

"My passion is decorating, it is a very neat to do," Theresa said. "Anyone who takes a class or two would be really surprised on what they could do."

Amy, who currently is a prep cook at J. Timothy's, a bar in Plainville, also placed first in the basic cake decorating competition in October. Her design theme was a "Harvest" which included a two-layer cake. The first layer was made up of grapes and fruits while the second layer consisted of fruits and vegetables flowing from a cornucopia. The ingredients included royal icing, melted Starburst candy and Tootsie Roll snacks.

The mother and daughter duo is currently creating a turkey cake for Thanksgiving. In Theresa's spare time, she decorates vegetables, edible fruit bouquets and cakes.

After receiving their degree, they plan to open their own catering service or restaurant. But Theresa said she doesn't know what the future holds.

The Culinary Arts certificate program at MCC is designed for both full and part-time students pursuing a career in commercial food preparation, restaurant ownership or catering. Graduates from this program may apply to the American Culinary Federation to become a certified cook.

Kerry Heeran can be reached at [kheeran@newbritainherald.com](mailto:kheeran@newbritainherald.com) or by calling (860)225-4601, Ext. 306.

