

# Redlands Daily Facts

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## Japanese students get a taste of American way around kitchen

Mt. SAC operates international program

By Diane Brown  
STAFF WRITER

**W**ALNUT — Tuesday's assignment to cook clam chowder and bake oatmeal cookies was an unusual task for a group of culinary students at Mt. San Antonio College.

An unexpected opportunity to deep-fry tortillas proved fascinating, said the students, who also pitched in to help campus staff members as they waited for the chowder to cook.

"It's beyond my imagination," student Natsuko Imasto said of the process of turning stacks of the flat bread into crisp, curved taco shells.

Imasto, 23, is one of 28 students who will graduate next month from the Kyusyu Bunka Gakuen cooking school in Kyushu, Japan — about two hours' drive north of the city of Nagasaki.

The entire class — 14 men and 14 women — is at Mt. SAC for a week-long field study in American cuisine that ends Thursday, officials said.

They are the first cooking students to participate in Mt. SAC's international education program, said Mary Bradshaw, the college ESL contract coordinator.

"They're real enthusiastic," said campus chef Wendy Rey, who worked alongside the international students during Tuesday's three-hour cooking session.

Interpreter Hitomi Gray translated conversations with the students, none of whom spoke English.

The chowder, bread bowls and cookies on Tuesday's menu were firsts for all the students.

"It's good," KGB student Shinya Hirachi, 19, said after she tasted the creamy soup. After graduation, Hirachi plans to work in a Japanese hotel cooking Western dishes.

The students visited the East San Gabriel Valley to see American commercial kitchens firsthand.

"You can't really understand a

cuisine unless you come to a country and experience it," said student Rumi Ishii, 23.

Their study included trips to three Old Pasadena restaurants, where they got the impression professional chefs in America have fun at their job.

"You have to be very uptight and serious in Japanese commercial kitchens," Hirachi said. "If you joke (like Americans), you get scolded."

In addition to visiting the Pasadena businesses, the students toured kitchens at the Ontario airport and the Pomona Valley Hospital.

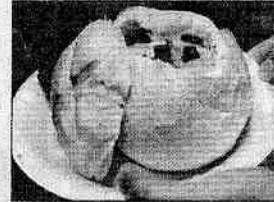
When they return to Japan, they will write a paper on the experience that will count as a small fraction of their grades, students said.

During their visit, the foreign students are staying with local families.

KGB school is one of three vocational schools that are part of an educational complex, which also includes a kindergarten-to-12th-grade school, and Nagasaki Community College, Mt. SAC's sister school.

Students from the community college will come to Mt. SAC later this month to train as flight attendants, said Bradshaw, adding that she's always looking for host families for visiting international students, including high school students and business and governmental agencies.

"Our college has a mission statement that declares that one of our goals is to be a very global, internationally focused campus," she said.



Staff photos by GREG ANDERSEN

**STUDENTS** from Japan study cooking at Mt. SAC. Above, Shinya Hirachi ladles chowder into hollowed bread. At top is the finished dish. Below, Rumi Ishii cuts a lemon as a garnish.

