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## Sodexo's Sonia is top of the class with chef award

Sodexo school chef Sonia Reynolds served up a tangy local lemon chicken on her way to scooping the coveted LACA South West School Chef of the Year 2007 title.

After winning her local heat, Sonia, who is based at the Brimbscombe Church of England Primary School, Gloucester, landed the top prize by beating five other leading school chefs in a final cook-off.

Her tangy local chicken, ginger delights and strawberries, inspired by locally sourced ingredients, secured her a place in the national final where she will be up against seven other regional title holders.

Organised by the Local Authority Caterers Association (LACA), the competition is an event exclusively for those in the education catering sector and aims to showcase the high standards of skill, creativity and professionalism amongst school caterers. Entry was open to all kitchen based staff employed by organisations that are full members of LACA and are involved with the daily preparation of school meals.

The annual competition put the preparation, cooking, creativity and presentation skills of school chefs to the test with each entrant required to produce, in just one and a half hours, a healthy balanced two-course meal comprising a main course and dessert that would appeal to eleven year olds in school. The dishes had to conform to the new Government food-based nutritional standards and were made up of poultry, meat, fish and non-meat proteins. A maximum of 80p per head was allowed for the food cost of a main course and dessert for one child.

As part of eight different judging criteria, contestants had to include ingredients reflecting seasonal availability, had to be sourced locally or typified the contestant's region.

Sonia said: "I have really enjoyed the whole experience so far and I'm so lucky to be doing something I really enjoy. I am delighted to be able to put together healthy dishes that children find appetising, and am looking forward to seeing these on future Sodexo menus. Fingers crossed for the finals, it's my first one so I am just going to go out there and enjoy it."

Joyce Bowery, Sodexo contract manager said: "I am delighted that Sonia has been successful in winning the Regional Heat of the LACA School chef of the year competition. It is fantastic achievement for Sonia personally and for Sodexo. The menu was delicious. I know this because I had the privilege attending Sonia's final practise session and tasted the finished products! Sodexo intend to include the winning dishes in future menus."

**Ends**