Michael hits judges’ tastebuds
IT Tallaght chef cooks up modern chicken classic with mystery ingredients

By Mary Dennehy
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A TALLAGHT IT student cooked up a storm in a national competition on Tuesday – when the budding chef impressed high-profile judges with his interesting flavour combinations and sharp presentation.

Student chef Michael Hanlon (24) secured a place in the final of the heated competition which this week saw him battle it out with the cream of Ireland’s student chefs.

While Michael didn’t win the title of Knorr Student Chef of the Year, he did catch the attention of top judges Catherine Fulvio, presenter and food writer, Mark McCarthy, Business Development Chef at Unilever Food Solutions, and Pat Zaidan, chef lecturer at Dublin Institute of Technology.

One of 14 shortlisted students, Michael caused a stir with his Modernist Chicken dish and dessert created from a mystery basket of ingredients – impressing judges with his “interesting flavour combinations” and “sharp presentation”.

Now in its 17th year, the theme of this year’s Knorr Student of the Year competition was Wise up on Waste which, coinciding with the European Year Against Food Waste, tasked finalists with using sustainably-sourced ingredients and limiting the amount of food waste generated.

The overall winner on the day was Fiona Drought of Coláiste de hÍde in Tallaght.

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A Trio of students from Coláiste de hÍde in Tallaght have signaled the need for more Irish in our shops and public spaces through their uniquely clever business venture, The Echo has learned.

Transition Year students Rian Leon, Seán Mac Aodhbhui and Adam Ó Gormáin created their business Gaol Saol as part of their entry into this year’s hotly contested Student Enterprise Awards – which will be staged in IT Tallaght this February 28.

The young entrepreneurs have created a viable business which designs and makes general signs as Gaeilge for use in business – and already profits of €400 have been made through the sale of signs to local businesses. Team member Rian Leon (16) told The Echo that signs can be made to highlight a product and its price, the store entrance or exit and ‘Thank You’ signs for cash registers.

Rian said: “We don’t believe that there is enough emphasis on the Irish language in business and we want to try and work on developing Irish – with all of our signs containing pronunciation so people can give the word a go.”

Gaol Saol is currently out on the beat visiting local shops and promoting their product – with includes a generic pack of 20 signs or a tailored package for individual customers.

“Customers can give us a list of 20 signs that they would like to suit their business, which we design, send to the printer and within 24-hours we have the product back in our hands,” Rian said.

“We are currently charging €20 for a pack of 20 signs and have to date made €400 – from business with local shops.

“We are hoping to attract the business of bigger supermarket chains and retailers and will be dropping into them with our product.”

Rian added: “We are definitely enjoying being part of the Student Enterprise Awards, it’s better than studying from a book all of the time.”

Coláiste de hÍde, which is based in Castlelyons, has a longstanding tradition in the Student Enterprise Awards – and hosted the awards until they were moved to the bigger venue of IT Tallaght in 2009.

This year, the Irish school has 16 groups entered into the competition – with inspirational business projects ranging from health eating to candles and keyrings to cakes. A learning aid for Irish and a South Dublin Tourism book have also been created.

Supported by the South Dublin County Enterprise Board, with sponsorship from IT Tallaght, the County Finals of the competition will be staged on February 28 – after which winners will go forward to represent South Dublin County at the National Final.

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Coláiste de hÍde students create Gaol Saol business to promote Irish language

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SIGN LANGUAGE: Coláiste de hÍde pupils Adam Ó Gormáin, Rian Leon and Seán Mac Aodhbhui with their by lingual signs.

Photos by Joe McCartney