



Business

Yes, on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Getting the Gulf Coast Cooking

At The Innovation Center on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, local entrepreneurs interested in the restaurant industry recently had an opportunity to get a taste of the business at the Restaurant Series, eight weeks of training courses offered by The Innovation Center and the Mississippi Small Business Development Center Gulf Coast. Due to its success, a second Restaurant Series is being offered in the spring.

Stephen Whitt, executive director of The Innovation Center, and Teresa Speir, Director of the SBDC, said they received great feedback from the course attendees. Out of a class of 12, two of the students have since been involved in the openings of restaurants, one person has entered into an apprenticeship with a local chef and two graduates are actively working on restaurant business plans.

“We don’t expect every graduate of this series to go out and open a restaurant,” said Whitt. “These courses will provide the students lasting knowledge that will be valuable in many different business situations and entrepreneurial ventures.”

The Spring Restaurant Series will be held one day a week over a six-week period. Input from the previous class helped the course administrators revise the curriculum to best suit the needs of the students. The spring sessions will include an overview of the industry, licensing and permitting; writing a business plan and Health and ABC Board regulations; marketing, advertising and promotions; vendors for restaurants; financing, tax and insurance; and managing growth.

Students are also asked to attend a monthly meeting of the Gulf Coast Chapter of the Mississippi Hospitality and Restaurant Association and receive a free one-year membership to the association upon graduation.

Whitt says, “We first developed this series based on continued requests from the community. We are excited about the success of the series and look forward to the positive growth it brings to our area.”



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