



Remarks by

**The Minister of Education
The Honourable T. Desmond Bannister, M.P.**

At

The Young Chef High Schools Awards

**C. C. Sweeting Senior High School
College Avenue**

Thursday, 18th March 2010

C. C. Sweeting Senior High School

3:00 pm

Salutations:

Mrs. Elma Garraway, Permanent Secretary;

Senior Education Officials:

Mrs. Delores Ingraham, Principal of C. C. Sweeting Senior High School;

Ms. Sharon Ferguson, Education Officer (Liaison to the Young Chefs Programme);

Mr. and Mrs. Keith Parker; Our Partners in the Young Chefs Programme;

Representatives Asa H. Pitchard, Mahatma Rice and Robin Hood Floor Brands;

Judges;

Johnson & Wales Representatives;

Our Aspiring Chefs;

Ladies and gentlemen.

It is indeed a pleasure to be here today to witness the culinary genius and creativity of our students who have participated in this 18th Annual Young Chefs Contest, who hail from Abaco to in the North to MICAL in the South and from both private and public schools.

The Young Chefs Programme has gained tremendous notoriety because it has showcased the culinary innovativeness of our students throughout the years and has become a launch pad for many young people desiring to pursue a career in the Hospitality Industry. The fact is that some eighty students who have participated in this competition have obtained employment in the Hospitality Industry and in Education through teaching Home Economics.

Hopefully some day we shall see the headlines in the media stating, *High School Culinary Competition Ignites Gastronomic Careers.* This is a story that should whet the appetite of some business reporter who will be prompted to feature it in the newspapers or television news. The Bahamian public would be very interested in knowing a small investment in students has produced tremendous benefits for the Bahamian economy through job creation.

I must thank Mr. Keith Parker for his vision in conceiving this programme and those individuals who embraced it and saw it as a sustainable project that could inspire so many students to develop their skills in the culinary field.

Another major benefit of this programme is that its scholarship opportunities for students. To date, some \$50,000 in scholarships has been awarded to students who have excelled in this competition students working with Mahatma Rice and Robin Hood Flour.

I am told that very soon, many of the recipes that have emerged from this competition will be featured in a Bahamian Cookbook. Additionally, I was informed that the parent company of those brands adapts certain recipes from so that they can be used in households all over the world.

I hope that this book will also include the importance of these two ingredients (flour and rice) in Bahamian cookery over the centuries and multi-purposed uses industrious Bahamian women found for the cloth sacks that they packaged in.

It also always gives me great pleasure when I see students represented from almost every island in The Bahamas in these national competitions. It is also noteworthy that by the time it has reached this stage, hundreds of students have participated at the school and district levels. The rewards of this programme I understand has been approximately \$500,000 over the 18-year span has been exceeded by the what our students have learned and the friendships, education and the self-confidence to strive for the highest level in the culinary fields in our hotels.

Our veteran chefs present are testimony to how far we have come in this area. They can also tell you that there was a time not so long ago when there were no Bahamian chefs in our kitchens in our major hotels and restaurants. Nowadays, our chefs are in the kitchens in Europe, the United States, Asia and other places.

I am delighted to know that we have high level representatives from the prestigious Johnson & Wales University. We are proud of the relationship that Johnson & Wales continues to have with the Ministry of Education and the Bahamas Hotel Association which has benefitted thousands of Bahamian students who attended that institution qualifying themselves for positions in our hospitality industry.

I want to commend all of the aspiring chefs who have entered today's competition. I trust that you acquired new techniques, new friends, and new insights into a career in the culinary field. Congratulations to the Senior and Junior winners who will be leaving with scholarships and cash prize and those who have the opportunity to experience a one week all-expense trip to Johnson & Wales Student Exploration Camp.

Finally, I wish to commend the organizers who behind the scenes to stage another Young Chefs Competition. Your hard work has not gone unnoticed and I am certain that our students appreciate your guidance and support in their efforts to become chefs of excellence throughout The Islands of The Bahamas.

Special thanks to the judges both local and international who have made this a caliber event by their association and their willingness to share their expertise with these young people.

Thank young chefs for allowing me this opportunity to experience your culinary genius on this occasion. Hopefully soon, I will be tasting your dishes in some of our country's finest restaurants.

Good afternoon.