

Eastern Arizona Courier

[Print Page](#)

Local News

Salsa Trail recipes sizzle

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Paige Stephenson, a Safford High School culinary arts student, mixes the ingredients for a desert during the Salsa Trail recipe contest on Saturday. Culinary students from Pima and Safford followed recipes from contestants for the final event of the contest. Contributed photo

Move over Emeril Lagasse.

Three Graham County residents — Karen Wiley of Pima, JoAnn Tallerico of Safford and Lisa Clifford of Safford — were named winners of the Salsa Trail recipe contest on Saturday. Their original recipes will be published in “The Salsa Trail Adventures in Culinary Tourism” book commissioned by the Graham County Chamber of Commerce. The author is Christine Maxa, and the photographer is David James.

The winners will have their recipes published in the book and will receive a Señor Salsa Trail kit. They also will be invited to participate in the second annual SalsaFest on Sept. 27 and 28.

Wiley’s recipe for her chalupa meat dish was named the winner of the main dish category, and Tallerico submitted the winning recipe — red pepper bisque — in the soups and salads category. In the dessert category, Clifford’s recipe for tropico tarta (tropical cake) took top honors.

Marie Freestone, the chamber’s membership coordinator, said more than 20 recipes were submitted in the contest. The recipes were pared down to 10 finalists on April 23 by using the following criteria: Organization and clarity, creative use of ingredients, ease of preparation and originality.

On Saturday, culinary arts students from Safford and Pima high schools followed the submitted recipes to prepare the items. After preparation, the dishes were judged on appearance, blend of flavors, texture, originality and clarity of instructions.

Freestone said the students appeared excited about preparing the recipes.

“They all had to work together,” she said.

Culinary arts teachers Carol Jones of Safford and David Cluff of Pima were present, and Graham County School Superintendent Donna McGaughey stopped by to check on their progress and sample the food.