



**18th Engineer Brigade
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54th Eng. Bn. Soldier demonstrates culinary talents at Army competition

Story by Sgt. Robert Larson, 54th Engineer Battalion UPAR

FORT LEE, Virginia – He had done his best, overcoming every obstacle in his way. All that remained was one final test. As he prepared himself for the trials that lie ahead, the Soldier chef did all he could to ready himself mentally and physically.

Staff Sgt. Joseph Dinuzzo, a food service specialist from the 54th Engineer Battalion's Forward Support Company, competed in the 35th U.S. Army Culinary Competition at Fort Lee, Va., in March.

Dinuzzo showed why he is one of the best chefs in the 21st Theater Sustainment Command and U.S. Army Europe by earning himself a gold medal for his hor'dourves and two bronze medals for his live competition dishes. His dishes included a chicken gumbo dish and also a loin of lamb presentation.

The event spanned two weeks, during which the competitors made dishes that were judged based on taste, presentation, variety and creativity. The competition was held to crown the best Soldier chefs in the Army and recognize them for their skills and talents.

“It was an honor being able to compete alongside some of the best chefs in the United States Army. The level of competition is really intense amongst that caliber of chef.” Dinuzzo said. “I went in with the mindset of I am going to win. We all did.”

Dinuzzo spent long hours in the kitchen making a wide variety of dishes out of an assorted basket of ingredients. Categories included main courses, side dishes, desserts, appetizers and cold cut platters.

Prior to the event, Dinuzzo attended Advanced Leaders Course, where he learned the skills needed to succeed in his everyday job. After which he made the trip along with the rest of the USAREUR culinary team and spent two weeks training at Fort Pickett, Va., where he would accept “nothing short of perfection,” he said.

When the competition ended, the USAREUR culinary team walked away with Installation of the Year, the first time in 18 years. It was also the first time in the 35 years of the competition that a team earned all the Gold Medals for all of the Static and Cold Food displays. A total of 22 Gold Medals presented to the USAREUR team.

“Above all, I have to say that I am proud and honored to have competed with so many amazing chefs,” Dinuzzo said.



Staff Sgt. Joseph Dinuzzo, a food service specialist from the Forward Support Company, 54th Engineer Battalion, prepares a dish during the 35th Annual U.S. Army Culinary Competition held in March at Fort Lee, Va. Dinuzzo won a Gold Medal and two Bronze Medals for his hard work during the competition. (Photo by Sgt. Maj. Mark Warren, U.S. Army Europe)