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Chefs Flex Culinary Muscle

Cook-Off at Culinary Institute Will Determine U.S. Entrant for 'Kitchen Olympics'

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By SUMATHI REDDY And NANCY MATSUMOTO

Forget the Super Bowl. For the chefs convening this weekend about 100 miles north of New York City, the big game comes this Sunday. And it requires a lot of cod.

The competition, held at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y., will crown the U.S. entrant in next year's Bocuse d'Or, a global event that is the equivalent of a kitchen Olympics. The four chefs in Sunday's event are vying to spend the next year engaged in grueling training for a tournament in which Americans have never surpassed sixth place.



Enlarge Image

Agence France-Presse/Getty Images

The jury of chefs at the Bocuse d'Or in 2010.

"I think we're still in this very interesting process where we're moving from the Jamaican bobsled team to a contender," said Gavin Kaysen, 32 years old, the executive chef at Café Boulud in Manhattan and the head coach who will train Sunday's winner.

The Bocuse d'Or, a biennial event to be held next year in Lyon, France, draws the best emerging culinary talents from 24 countries. "I don't think there is another

cooking competition, as far as internationally speaking, as big as this," said Mr. Kaysen. "This is the most prestigious and difficult to be part of."

On Sunday, the chefs trying to represent the U.S. at the next Bocuse d'Or are: Bill Bradley, a chef instructor at Le Cordon Bleu in Cambridge, Mass.; Danny Cerqueda, executive sous chef at the Carolina Country Club in Raleigh, N.C.; Jeffrey Lizotte, chef de cuisine at ON2O in Hartford, Conn.; and Richard Rosendale, executive chef of the Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, W.Va.

The four competitors will be judged by expert chefs as they prepare their dishes in kitchens that are exact replicas of the ones in Lyon.

Among the judges are Chicago's Grant Achatz and New York's Gabriel Kreuther, the executive chef at [Danny Meyer's Modern](#). The two chefs, along with Mr. Kaysen, will then train the winner for the next year.

"The training process...it's kind of crazy," said Mr. Kreuther. "It's unforgiving. It's really tough. You're putting everything into the game and you're surrounded by people that coach you, that judge you, that push you to extreme boundaries."

"You can compare it to a high-performing top athlete," he added.

Indeed, Mr. Kaysen said last year he oversaw about 2,300 hours of training for Mr. Kent. But that kind of commitment still puts the Americans far behind the global powerhouses.

Mr. Kaysen said last year's victor, Danish chef Rasmus Kofoed, trained for 8,000 hours before the competition.