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FLAVOR

AUGUST STANDOUTS
Our tasting panel picks their favorite pours, with great value and availability in town. PAGE F2

BREADS WINES DINING DESSERTS GRILLS SOUPS SALADS HERBS TABLE SETTINGS

Houston's top chefs seek sweet victory on Just Desserts

Vanarin Kuch and Rebecca Masson compete on Bravo show

By GREG MORAGO
FOOD EDITOR

It is with no small measure of giddy glee that we tune in tonight to the first episode of Bravo's Top Chef Just Desserts where not one but two Houston pastry chefs get some well-earned national exposure.

The second season of the pastry chef smack-down finds Rebecca Masson and Vanarin Kuch among the 14 contestants competing for the top prize of \$100,000 and a feature in Food & Wine magazine. Masson, who studied pastry at Le Cordon Bleu, is well known within the Houston restaurant community, having worked at 17 at the Alden after stints at db Bistro Moderne, Daniel, The Biltmore Room and The Red Cat in New York. She currently has launched her own business, Fluff Bake Bar, and hopes to eventually begin retail operations in her own brick-and-mortar store. Kuch, a graduate of The Art Institute of Houston, worked at Bank at Hotel Icon and Hotel Zaza. A rising star, Kuch currently works as pastry chef at Tiny Boxwoods and in October will compete (along with Houston pastry chef Chris Leung) among 20 international pastry chefs selected for the second Annual Starchefs.com

Please see DESSERTS, Page F4

INSIDE



Relax on a steamy summer evening with creative takes on classic cocktails.

RECIPES, PAGE F3



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EGGS



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EGGS: Despite their bad reputation for cholesterol and fat, eggs are an essential ingredient in a healthy diet, said Roberta Anding, of Texas Children's Hospital. The choline found in eggs and nuts promotes memory and brain development, she said. "If you're looking for foods that give you sustained energy, choline tends to stand out."

OMEGA-3



FOTOLIA

OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS: Tuna, salmon, avocado, nuts and olive oil are some of the best sources for these healthy fats, which help improve cognitive functions. "Study after study has shown that they are good for the developing brain," said Anding. Omega-3 fatty acids are beneficial for the brain and the retina of the eye, while a deficiency can lead to anxiety and depression.

GRAINS



AP

WHOLE GRAINS: Not only do the complex carbohydrates in whole grains provide an energy source, these "nutritional heroes" also contain phytonutrients, folate and B vitamins that boost memory. Instead of buying white bread and processed pasta, look for oatmeal, 100 percent whole-wheat bread, and whole-grain pasta.

SMART START FOR SCHOOL

FRUITS & VEGETABLES

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES: Rich in antioxidants like vitamin A, vitamin C, and vitamin E, fruits and vegetables are nutritional superstars that should be included in most meals and snacks. The phytonutrients found in blueberries and red vegetables also have been linked to improved cognitive function and can help sharpen memory, Anding noted. "To get absolutely the best school performance, we have to put fruits and vegetables in our children's diets."



STAFF PHOTO

PROTEIN

LEAN PROTEIN: Red meat, poultry, Greek yogurt, fish and legumes are all good sources of protein. The iron in lean red meat increases mental alertness and energy levels and is "essential to optimal brain function," said Elizabeth Fassberg, of the Jamie Oliver Food Foundation. Pairing protein with whole grains helps avoid a sharp drop in blood sugar.



FAMILY FEATURES

WATER

WATER: Dehydration can lead to fatigue, foggy and dizziness, so good hydration is crucial to keeping concentration levels high. However, nutritionists warn against giving children sugary sodas or juices, which can contribute to obesity and malnutrition. (In addition, many schools prohibit sodas and juices in the classroom.) The best bet is to make sure your children drink plenty of water throughout the day.



FOTOLIA

BRAIN FOODS HELP SEND KIDS TO THE HEAD OF THE CLASS

TIPS FOR AMPING UP NUTRITION IN YOUR CHILDREN'S DIET

BREAKFAST

Wrap a sliced, hard-boiled egg and string cheese in a whole-grain tortilla: This portable meal contains energy-producing choline.

Make a breakfast sandwich: Make it the night before using a whole-wheat English muffin, ham and cheese. In the morning, zap it for 20 seconds in the microwave for a quick and healthy meal.

Spread peanut or almond butter on a whole-grain bagel or English muffin: Top with sliced bananas or apples. The healthy fats, protein and complex carbohydrates boost energy and provides a sense of fullness.



By MONICA RHOR

THERE'S something infinitely hopeful about the approach of another school year. Shopping for stylish outfits and checking off the list of fresh supplies. Store aisles filled with unsold notebooks and rafts of pens still swathed in plastic wrap. Backpacks bulging with pristine textbooks. It's a time of promise and possibility, a chance to shed bad habits and adopt good ones.

Not just in the classroom, but in the lunchbox and at the breakfast and dinner table. After all, school performance depends as much on solid nutrition as on study routines. Eating nutrient-dense meals and snacks at regular intervals and avoiding processed, sugary foods can boost brain development, improve concentration and give children the energy to make it through a long school day, according to nutritionists and dietitians. "Kids' brains are developing and churning out information at all times. It's important to feed their

little brains and bodies with the most high-quality, vitamin and mineral packed foods possible." said Elizabeth Fassberg, a nutritionist with the Jamie Oliver Food Foundation. "Science has shown that food affects kids' memory, attention, and cognitive skills." For Kari Kooi, a registered dietitian at The Methodist Hospital, eating for brain power boils down to three basics: eat at regular intervals, stay hydrated and eat close to the ground. She urges parents to avoid giving children energy-zapping foods like candy. Please see SCHOOL, Page F4

WINE & CHEESE OF THE WEEK
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Sartori Espresso BellaVitano
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