

IT'S LIKE GOOD COOKING

Claims Training Benefits from a Little Spicing Up

BY KRISTLE GROGAN, SENIOR EDITOR

As the great chef and TV personality Emeril Lagasse says, “A little BAM goes a long way.” Emeril is known not only for his incredible cooking, but also for the interesting and fun way he demonstrates his cooking knowledge and skills.

So when the course designers for International Insurance Institute were looking for a way to spice up their training, they followed Chef Emeril’s lead. They decided to spice up their training by creating gift baskets that students compete for during training sessions.

“Many of our classes are interactive, role-play classes, which require volunteers to help demonstrate the skills we are teaching in class. Since volunteers can be hard to come by, we were looking for a way to add an incentive. By putting together gift baskets for which teams in the class compete, we found it very easy to get volunteers, and have a lot of fun at the same time,” said III’s Executive Vice President LeiAnn Dunford.

Certainly the most sought-after item is the personally autographed

cookbook by Emeril Lagasse. III’s President and CEO Carl Van, a neighbor of Emeril’s, arranged for the famous chef to sign the cookbooks to give out in the first-place baskets.

“The gift baskets were always fun to give out and watch people compete for, but there is no doubt that once people see that autographed Emeril book, the competition really heats up. It’s certainly added some “Bam” to the training sessions,” said III’s Director of Training Dave Vanderpan.

“What is interesting about adding the Emeril cookbook to the prize basket is the number of times people will relate what they have heard Emeril say on his TV show to the subject at hand. From the customer service classes, to the negotiations classes, and even to the time management classes. Somehow, something Emeril has said or done on his show gets brought up in class as an example of how to improve,” said Ken Sanders, senior international trainer of III.

Although the purpose of all of the courses is to enlighten the claim professional with real-life claims knowledge and skills, it never hurts to have a little fun.

“Normally, I would never volunteer to get up in front of a group of people and try a new skill, but when I saw that Emeril book, all my fears took a back seat. When I won it, I was so thrilled because both my husband and I are such huge fans of Chef Emeril. Oh, and by the way, I actually learned something in class because of it. So, I really won twice,” Susan Leftet said.

John Ramon, a trainer at a national insurance company that brought in III to conduct a negotiations class, said, “We have the hardest time getting people to volunteer in any training session to try something new in front of the group. Everyone knows and loves Emeril, so even the chance to win an autographed book has inspired people to take risks from which they would normally shy away. It has literally changed some people’s attitude toward not being afraid to try.”

In a way, world class claims training can be a lot like world class cooking. Once you’ve had a taste, all you can do is think about your next bite.

International Insurance Institute is very proud to participate in the Emeril Lagasse Carnivale du Vin charity event, by hosting a table at next year’s 2007 event. For information about Carnivale du Vin, and the wonderful cause it supports, please visit www.carnivaleduvin.com. See story on page 10 about the charity event and III’s invitation to insurance executives to attend in 2007.

