



Kendall College
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For Immediate Release

Kendall College School of Culinary Arts Student Takes Top Honors at Annual S.Pellegrino® *Almost Famous* Chef® Central Regional Competition

Qi Ai, a Chinese National, Brings Fourth Regional Win for Kendall College

Chicago—January 13, 2015—Kendall College School of Culinary Arts student Qi Ai won the titles of Central Regional and People’s Choice winner at the S.Pellegrino *Almost Famous* Chef cooking competition, hosted at Kendall College on January 12, 2015. Ai, a native of Beijing, China, impressed the panel of judges with her innovative signature recipe called Duo of Duck. Now she advances to the finals competition to be held in Napa Valley, California in March. This is the fourth year a Kendall student has won the regional competition.

Ai competed against other students in the Central Region, representing culinary-arts programs at six institutions, during a two-day, highly competitive cook-off, judged by celebrity chefs David Posey formerly of Blackbird, Curtis Duffy of Grace, Sarah Grueneberg of Monteverde, Matt McCallister of FT33 and Marco Bahena the 2010 Regional Winner. Ai was announced the winner of both the People’s Choice and Central Regional awards during the tasting reception in front of an excited audience of local media, chefs and invited guests.

Qi Ai is one of many Chinese students who attend Kendall as an influx of international students seeks culinary arts education from a leading U.S. institution. “I am so honored to have been selected as this year’s Central Regional winner,” said Qi. “This was an intense competition, and one that gave me the opportunity to work with and get tips from so many chefs that I look up to and admire. It was a great experience and I look forward to representing Kendall College and the Central Region during the finals competition in Napa Valley.”

At the 12th annual Finals in March, Ai will compete against nine other regional winners from across the United States front of a panel of food media, distinguished guests and renowned chefs during a three-day cookoff. The overall winner will take the title, up to \$10,000 in prizes and a paid apprenticeship from one of the participating chef judges.

“We are so proud of Qi, and to see her continue Kendall College’s legacy within the S.Pellegrino *Almost Famous* Chef Central Regional competition. She is a great example of our thriving international student body, which has increased by nearly 80% in the last year,” said Emily Williams Knight, president of Kendall College. “We’ll all be cheering for her in Napa Valley. She is such a powerful inspiration for women not only in China but throughout Asia, where culinary arts education is a rare career choice. We are very proud of what Qi has already accomplished and the enrichment she and other international students bring to our campus.”

The S.Pellegrino *Almost Famous* Chef competition was started in 2002 as a mentoring program to connect the nation’s top culinary students with leading chefs and culinary media. Since then, S.Pellegrino has partnered with leading culinary schools across the U.S. every year to host the cooking competition, which highlights the



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top talent coming out of culinary classrooms. The program consists of 5 regional competitions where students compete before the culinary media, all leading up to the final competition in Napa Valley, California.

About the Kendall College School of Culinary Arts:

Kendall College, founded in 1934, is located in Chicago and is a member of the Laureate International Universities network. Kendall offers undergraduate degrees in business, culinary arts, early childhood education and hospitality management to a diverse and passionate community of more than 1,650 students. The curriculum combines strong academics with practical experience and international educational opportunities that help give students in business, hospitality and culinary arts programs the skills and expertise to be leaders in their professions. Kendall College was ranked the number one program in Chicago for preparing students for careers in hospitality management and culinary arts in a survey of management at Chicago's leading hotels and Michelin Guide restaurants (TNS Global – 2013 Survey). The American Culinary Federation Education Foundation Accrediting Commission has accredited the Culinary Arts associate program since 1988 and the Baking and Pastry associate program since 2008. Kendall College is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission and a member of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, ncahlc.org; 312.263.0456. For more information, visit Kendall.edu.