

Feature Writing

State Meet • 2024



You are a reporter for the **Leaguetown Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School.

From the given information, write a **feature story** as you would for the high school newspaper. You may use statements attributed to individuals as **direct or indirect quotes**. You may not change the meaning of a statement. You have **one hour**.

Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or your entry. **Put your number on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School has 648 students in grades 9-12. This year, sophomore Alfonse Delgado joined the culinary arts program after years of observing and helping his mom in the kitchen. The class is double-blocked for students to prepare and serve meals for catering jobs and box lunches to faculty and staff on Fridays.

During winter break, Delgado applied to be cast in a new Food Network show called “Home Chef Champions.” In February, he received a call to audition via Zoom, and a few weeks later, the casting director notified him that he was selected to compete on the show. The Food Network will fly Delgado and one family member to Los Angeles May 25 to film his episode and compete to win \$15,000. Delgado will compete against three other amateur chefs in three different rounds: appetizer, entree and dessert. During each round, contestants will receive a box of three surprise ingredients they must use to create their plate. Judges will eliminate one contestant during each round, and the last chef remaining will be named Home Chef Champion. His episode is scheduled to air in the fall.

To help him prepare for the competition, the school will have a practice day May 17 when people and groups can present Delgado with their own surprise ingredient boxes to allow him to practice using different ingredients before the show taping. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed May 15.

■ ALFONSE DELGADO, sophomore

“I’ve spent my whole life watching my mom in the kitchen. My dad died when I was little, so it’s just been the two of us. To save money, we never ordered pizza or went out to eat. We learned how to make delicious meals with the ingredients we had in the pantry. Fried chicken, enchiladas, mac and cheese, mashed potatoes and gravy, all kinds of roasts — comfort foods. That’s what I think of when I think of cooking at home. For the past year, I’ve been the main chef of the house. It feels pretty good to take what my mom has taught me and do my part to contribute to the household. Each week, I plan a menu and make a grocery list. I love doing it.

“We spent all winter break binge-watching the last season of ‘Home Chef Champions’ before my mom finally convinced me to see if they were taking applications. The Zoom audition was a little awkward. They had me set up my computer in my kitchen and talked to me while I prepared a tamale casserole. My mom came on-camera and tasted my creation at the end of the audition. She took a bite and actually started crying. The casserole was OK. It needed cilantro on top. I think she was just proud to taste the dish that might get me on TV. It must’ve worked.

“I was preparing to season a pork roast when I got the phone call from

■ ALFONSE DELGADO, continued

the casting director. I dropped a jar of apricot preserves on my foot and screamed. I was so thrilled and proud to be doing something special with my cooking. My episode will feature me and three other high school students from around the country. At this point, I don't care that much if I win or lose. I just want to make my mom proud. Don't get me wrong. It would be great to get \$15,000 and put a down payment on a new car for my mom. I'm bringing her with me to film the episode in L.A. She would do anything for me. I hope I get the chance to celebrate her for teaching me everything I know that got me here.

"I'm going to use all the skills from my mom and all the training I've had in culinary arts. It's tough because I have no idea what the surprise ingredients will be. Could be Skittles, peanut butter, pomegranate or Cap'n Crunch. I have no idea. But Ms. Day said to make sure I have salt, fat, acid and heat on each plate and that I taste my food as I go. I think if I follow her words of advice and keep thinking about doing this for my mom, victory could taste pretty sweet."

■ GLADYS DAY, culinary arts teacher

"On the second day of school, I gave students a chicken breast, access to seasonings and a stainless steel pan, just to see what students would come up with. Most of them didn't even get the chicken cooked through. Alfonse tenderized his chicken and seasoned it well. I didn't even need to eat lunch because I finished eating his assignment. We'll be pulling for him when he's in L.A. I've only taught Alfonse for one year, but if I've ever taught any student who can pull off something like this, it's him. I'm sure he'll put together some delicious food for those judges.

"We've been advertising his practice day like a 'Stump the Chef' kind of event. We had different classes and groups sign up for different blocks of time. People will come down to our kitchen and give Alfonse 30 minutes to make something with whatever they put in the box. I know the admin team is planning to bring in some plant-based hamburger meat, American cheese and popcorn. Who knows what he'll make out of these things. I'm sure students will come up with some pretty creative ingredients, and by the time he gets to L.A., he'll be ready."

■ JENAI DELGADO, Alfonse's mother

"When Alfonse was a toddler, I would sit him up on the counter with me when I was gathering ingredients to cook. He would grab the herbs and spices and smell and taste them. He's always been my little assistant in the kitchen. At some point when he was in eighth grade, his cooking got way better than mine. Since he's gotten older, he's taken over all the cooking. His enchiladas are better than any I've ever made. He's also just so funny and creative. While I was surprised he got a call for an audition, I wasn't surprised he was chosen. Of course, I'm a little biased.

"We've never been to California before. We plan to stay a couple extra days and see some of the sites and take a few studio tours. I'm so grateful to have Alfonse, not just because he's such a good cook. He's a fantastic son."

■ ADRIANA SANCHEZ, senior

"My friends and I are putting together a box with a cucumber, Red Vines and shrimp. I'm not sure I'm going to want to eat whatever Alfonse comes up with, but it will at least be interesting to see what he does. I was in his culinary arts class, and Alfonse was so far ahead of the rest of us. He spends most of the class time just experimenting and trying new techniques out of our textbook. We're all excited for him to represent Leaguetown on the Food Network."

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

State Meet • 2024 Feature Writing Contest Tips and Sample Story

Contest Director: Give one copy to each judge to use during critiquing/judging. Also, staple one copy of the contest and one copy of the contest tips to each student's returned entry. The purpose of the tips is to provide immediate feedback to students. However, it is not meant to replace written comments from the judge.

1. Figure out what the story is about and its theme or focus. This story is about a sophomore who will appear on a Food Network cooking show.

2. The lead of a feature story must grab the reader's attention. It does not have to be a certain length or include the 5Ws and H. It should set a scene and get the reader into the story. Although you have freedom to describe the scene as you think it might have existed, try to stay close to the prompt. Judges will not want you to wander off the subject too much.

After spending his winter break binge-watching amateur chefs cook with surprise ingredients on his favorite show, sophomore Alfonse Delgado finally applied to be a contestant on "Home Chef Champions." And months later he will go from viewer to competitor, vying for a \$15,000 prize against three other amateur chefs in Los Angeles.

3. Once you get past the lead, make sure you include a nut graph. It tells the reader what the story will be about. Follow the nut graph with a direct quote and then go into the transition/quote formula.

nut graph

As anticipation grows for his episode, which films May 25 and will air this fall, students and faculty can visit the culinary classroom May 17 to present Delgado with surprise ingredient boxes to mimic the competition and help him practice.

direct quote

"I've spent my whole life watching my mom in the kitchen," Delgado said. "We learned how to make delicious meals with the ingredients we had in the pantry. Fried chicken, enchiladas, mac and cheese, mashed potatoes and gravy, all kinds of roasts — comfort foods."

4. After the nut graph, the rest of the story can tell itself through the use of transition/quote formula. Be sure you attribute after the quote or at least after the first sentence. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution ("Delgado said" not "said Delgado"). Avoid putting two or more quotes together without placing some kind of transition between them. Also, make sure transitions provide information to help the action of the story and that the quote does not repeat information in the transition.

transition/story-telling

Delgado's mother, Jenai Delgado said he has been in the kitchen since he was a toddler and as his skills improved, he took over all the cooking.

direct quote

"He would grab the herbs and spices and smell and taste them," she said. "He's always been my little assistant in the kitchen. While I was surprised he got a call for an audition, I wasn't surprised he was chosen. Of course, I'm a little biased."

5. Always use third person. Don't say "our student" or "our students." Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say "Go Alfonse!" These statements are personal opinions and should not be used in a feature story.

6. Always use the verb "said" as the verb of attribution. Don't say "says," "stated," "feels" or any other synonym for "said."

7. Finally, look for a strong quote to use as a closing statement or a statement that will bring the reader back to the beginning of the story. It should give the reader a sense of satisfaction or resolution.

After a full day of practice, Delgado said he'll take all the skills his mom taught him and all the training from culinary arts class and do his best to win the cash prize, which he would use put a down payment on a new car for his mom. But no amount of practice can prepare him for those mystery boxes.

"I have no idea what the surprise ingredients will be," he said. "Could be Skittles, peanut butter, pomegranate or Cap'n Crunch. I have no idea. But Ms. Day said to make sure I have salt, fat, acid and heat on each plate and that I taste my food as I go. I think If I follow her words of advice and keep thinking about doing this for my mom, victory could taste pretty sweet."

SAMPLE STORY

After spending his winter break binge-watching amateur chefs cook with surprise ingredients on his favorite show, sophomore Alfonse Delgado finally applied to be a contestant on “Home Chef Champions.” And soon he will go from viewer to competitor, vying for a \$15,000 prize against three other amateur chefs in Los Angeles.

As anticipation grows for his episode, which films May 25 and will air this fall, students and faculty can visit the culinary classroom May 17 to present Delgado with surprise ingredient boxes to mimic the competition and help him practice.

“I’ve spent my whole life watching my mom in the kitchen,” Delgado said. “We learned how to make delicious meals with the ingredients we had in the pantry. Fried chicken, enchiladas, mac and cheese, mashed potatoes and gravy, all kinds of roasts — comfort foods.”

Delgado’s mother, Jenai Delgado said he has been in the kitchen since he was a toddler and as his skills improved, he took over all the cooking.

“He would grab the herbs and spices and smell and taste them,” she said. “He’s always been my little assistant in the kitchen. While I was surprised he got a call for an audition, I wasn’t surprised he was chosen. Of course, I’m a little biased.”

After watching “Home Chef Champions” with his mom, she was the one who convinced Delgado to apply. He said during his Zoom audition, his mother cried on camera taking a bite of his tamale casserole.

“I think she was just proud to taste the dish that might get me on TV,” he said. “It must’ve worked.”

Delgado said he plans to take his mother with him to L.A. for the audition.

“She would do anything for me,” he said. “I hope I get the chance to celebrate her for teaching me everything I know that got me here.”

As a sophomore, Delgado signed up for culinary arts class to improve his skills even further. His teacher Gladys Day said if any of her students could pull off a win, it’s him.

“On the second day of school, I gave students a chicken breast, access to seasonings and a stainless steel pan, just to see what students would come up with,” she said. “Most of them didn’t even get the chicken cooked through. Alfonse tenderized his chicken and seasoned it well. I didn’t even need to eat lunch, because I finished eating his assignment.”

During the “Stump the Chef” style practice event, groups will sign up for time blocks where Delgado has 30 minutes to create a dish with whatever three ingredients are in the box.

“My friends and I are putting together a box with a cucumber, Red Vines and shrimp,” senior classmate Adriana Sanchez said. “I’m not sure I’m going to want to eat whatever Alfonse comes up with, but it will at least be interesting to see what he does.”

After a full day of practice, Delgado said he’ll take all the skills his mom taught him and all the training from culinary arts class and do his best to win the cash prize, which he would use put a down payment on a new car for his mom. But no amount of practice can prepare him for those mystery boxes.

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