

Marine Corps Logistics Command is represented at the Olympics: US Marine's Historic Showing

By Kelly Nance | ODO | Marine Corps Logistics Command | Sep 30, 2016

Every four years, over 90,000 spectators from around the world flock to Germany for the International Exhibition of Culinary Art (IKA) Culinary Olympics where thousands of experts showcase their refined skills on a world stage. This October, Marine Corps Logistics Command's (LOGCOM's) own Sgt Joseph Hale, Enlisted Aide to MajGen Craig C. Crenshaw, will have a front row seat at the proverbial dinner table.

Actually, Sgt Hale is making history as the first food service Marine to compete in the Olympics. An apprentice on the U.S. Army Culinary Arts Team (USACAT), Hale's role involves working directly under SSG Sara Deckert preparing various components for her final dishes. "I am humbled to be working under the expertise of one of the best Chefs in the U.S. Army, and feel privileged to be a member of this select team," he stated.

Also known as the U.S. National Military Culinary Team, USACAT is composed of the finest chefs in the Armed Forces who compete at local, national, and international culinary competitions. Sgt Hale, an eight year veteran, is the only Marine alongside nine Army and two Navy service members competing at this prestigious international competition.

Much like the static food displays and live cooking demonstrations on reality TV cooking competitions, the Food Olympics has world-class culinary masters meticulously scrutinizing craftsmanship, timing, collaboration, presentation and taste of various dishes. Gold, silver and bronze medals are awarded to those who demonstrate superiority in their respective categories.

This year, USACAT is competing against 59 regional teams in two categories. In the Hot-Food event, 150 three-course meals are prepared and served. The Cold-Food event involves more than 24 hours of preparing 21 dishes for a display table in the Olympic exhibition hall.

As a teen, Joseph Hale worked in a restaurant in his southern Indiana hometown. It was the influence of a contagiously passionate chef that ultimately led Hale to appreciate food service as more than just a job. While on active duty, he attended the Culinary Institute of America and has since excelled as a military culinarian.



Sgt Hale puts the finishing touches to his "Bone-in lamb dish" at the 2015 Military Culinary Arts Competitive Training Event. His dish was awarded Best in Class, and secured Hale's spot on the USACAT team.

“His versatility continues to amaze me,” says MajGen Crenshaw of Hale’s cuisine. “He has been here for several months, but hasn’t prepared the same dish twice.”

Sgt Hale holds distinctions of Pro Chef I from the Culinary Institute of America and Certified Chef de Cuisine from the American Culinary Federation. After rigorous research and development training at the Military Culinary Arts Competitive Training Event in Fort Lee, Virginia, he was selected to the USACAT team in 2015. Before coming to LOGCOM, Hale served as Cook at the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) executive dining facility where he worked for Defense Secretaries Panetta, Hagel and Carter.

Hale attributes his culinary success to his OSD Cohorts, Senior Marine Enlisted Aides, and fellow teammates. “I have an extremely blessed career to be surrounded by Chefs from all branches that really care. They are very inspirational people to work with” he says.

In addition to culinary excellence, a key element for USACAT acceptance is a willingness to give back by sharing talents with others in the food service field. Hale certainly meets this requirement as he encourages young food service Marines across the ranks to take advantage of opportunities available to further their culinary career.



Sgt Hale with Defense Secretary Hagel



Sgt Hale with MajGen Craig C. Crenshaw, Commanding General, Marine Corps Logistics Command

“There are so many opportunities...you just have to seek them out and apply.” He mentions the Marine Corps Enlisted Aide Program, Marine Corps Junior Skills Culinary Team, and Chef of the Quarter competitions to name a few.

The 2016 IKA Culinary Olympics will be 22-26 October. MajGen Crenshaw and all of LOGCOM are wishing Sgt Joseph D Hale and the USACAT team the best of luck. Feel free to post an encouraging message to the team on LOGCOM’s FaceBook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Marine-Corps-Logistics-Command-209320339250813/?fref=ts>).

Photos courtesy of Sgt Joseph Hale