

Aggies Win Smart Snacks Competition

Lynnette Harris

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By Lynnette Harris

Award-winning food science students Jared Buhler, Savannah Branson, and Melissa Marsh (left to right) with a sample of Moonola.

Many hours of creative effort paired with food science skills resulted in a win for a team of Utah State University students. With their tasty snack, "Moonola," students Savannah Branson, Melissa Marsh, and Jared Buhler won the Institute of Food Technologists' Smart Snacks for Kids competition and a \$3,000 prize.

The three collaborated to create Moonola, an instant granola cereal packed with protein and color-changing milk. Team members were challenged to use their imaginations and food science knowledge to create a new product that is nutritious, fun, appealing to children and teens, and that meets USDA Smart Snack guidelines.



Branson said the team's goal was an on-the-go cereal that only needs a little water added to hydrate the nonfat dry milk coating the granola clusters. A little dry, colored powder adds some fun and the packaging serves as a bowl. Team members worked their way through challenges related to extending Moonola's shelf life and

several related to COVID-19, which meant a lot of online meetings and collaboration.

WRITER

Lynnette Harris

Editor

College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

lynnette.harris@usu.edu

MEDIA CONTACT

Heidi Wengreen

Nutrition, Dietetics and Food Sciences

heidi.wengreen@usu.edu
