

# Recipes for Success

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03/22/2023

Cultivate

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By Lynnette Harris | March 22, 2023



*Food science grad students seen with their award-winning product.*

Food science graduate students Nathan Pougher, Chandler Stafford, Mackenzie Taylor, Melissa Marsh, and Annalisa Jones conquered three national product development competitions, securing two first-place wins in contests sponsored by Ocean Spray and the National Dairy Council and a third-place award in the Institute of Food Technologists competition.

Marie Walsh, professor of food science at Utah State University, served as the team's faculty advisor.

"It takes months of dedication by the students to become a finalist in a product development competition," said Walsh. "The students work diligently and complete reports, sensory evaluations, and presentations. The department as well as others support the students in these endeavors by providing financial and facilities support."

### Dessert "Tacos"

The students' winning entry in the Ocean Spray competition was "Crococ," customizable cranberry dessert tacos. The snack box includes cranberry fruit leather cut into rounds to make a tortilla-esque outer wrap, brownie crumbles to mimic a ground meat filling, dyed coconut that

resembles lettuce, and small crunchy meringues to stand in for cotija cheese.

In addition to making a snack that was healthy for kids and adhered to USDA guidelines, the competition included a sustainability challenge to incorporate one or more components that are wasted in current food production. The students incorporated cranberry press cake (fruit solids leftover from the juicing process), cranberry permeate, and ground cocoa shells.

### Dairy for Gamers

The team also developed a beverage for the National Dairy Council's competition. Participants were challenged to create an innovative dairy-based product for gamers. Among young people in the U.S., 94% report playing some video games and 48% drink soft drinks while they play, making gamers a large potential market for a new kind of drink.

The team developed a dairy-based, pineapple-flavored energy drink made from acid whey and whey phospholipid protein concentrate with high-protein coconut-flavored boba gummies. The drink's name "MOBA Boba" a nod to gamer slang for Multiplayer Online Battle Arena games. It also has 130 mg of caffeine which is comparable to other energy drinks.

Marsh said acid whey has been a challenge for dairy companies to upcycle because its high mineral content makes it difficult to dispose of and its acidic flavor was not very palatable. But they hit on a formula they feel will resonate with gamers because of its taste, nutrition, energy and sustainability components.

### Hatching a Smart Cookie

As a smaller team, Marsh and Annalisa Jones competed in the Institute of Food Technologists' Smart Snacks for Kids Contest. They began work on "Saurus Snacks" in early 2021 but were not selected to compete as a finalist in that year's competition.

After a year of improving their product, Marsh and Jones came up with the final version of Saurus Snacks, an interactive snack comprised of a lightly sweetened meringue "eggshell" enclosing one of three dinosaur cookies and were invited to compete as finalists.

Read more about the winning products [online](#).

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