

For Immediate Release

Alabama 4-H'er Wins National Cornbread Festival Championship

Gordie Cartwright has earned a slice of national fame, cornbread slice that is. The 10-year-old Alabama 4-H'er recently won the 2010 4-H Cornbread Cook-Off Contest held in South Pittsburg, Tenn.

For Cartwright, from the small town of Gantt near Andalusia, it was the first big contest he ever entered, and as a first-year 4-H'er, he set his sights high.

He created his winning recipe, sweet potato cornbread, after watching his mom eat a sweet potato. "I'd never made cornbread before, but I got to thinking about it and thought I'd give it a try," he said.

"The first couple of times, it didn't taste right but we worked on it and came up with a recipe we liked," added Cartwright, who is president of his 4-H club.

Cartwright learned about the contest from 4-H Agent Assistant Tanya Bales, who leads clubs of fourth-graders at Straughn Elementary School. Bales told the youngsters about the national contest and worked with them on the specific rules of the competition. "The rules are strict and Gordie did a good job doing exactly as instructed," she said.

Only 10 finalists were selected nationally from the approximately 200 who submitted recipes in the annual 4-H cook-off open only to fourth-graders. "The national cornbread committee, which consists of cornbread and cooking professionals, as well as Tennessee state 4-H staff, judge the recipes and narrow them down to the top 10," Bales said.

Once selected, Cartwright, Bales and others worked to raise money for him to attend the contest in Tennessee. To help pay for the trip, Gordie, Bales and others spent several Saturdays at the Tractor Supply Company store in Andalusia raising money, offering slices of his cornbread for a donation.

Once there, Cartwright and the other contestants had to cook in front of the judges as well as talk to them about his recipe. "I wasn't too nervous when I was cooking," he said. "But the judges came up to my table and I had to tell them what I was doing and mainly why my recipe was original."

For his efforts, Cartwright won a \$400 cash prize and a gift bag filled with Lodge cast iron and Martha White products. Like most 10-year-olds, Cartwright purchased a Nintendo DSi with his earnings.

Cartwright has become a local celebrity – the Covington County Commission has honored him, and plans are being made for other recognitions in the community.

The Cartwright family has an interest in cooking, parents Rick and Christy previously owned a restaurant and still cater occasionally. “I saw my mom and dad cooking and liked it, and they would let me help sometimes,” he said.

Cartwright said he will continue competing – his latest venture was in the Chicken Que contest at 4-H regional competition. He’s not old enough for statewide competition but he’s looking forward to state 4-H Competitive Events Day in the future.

“I’m going to be the next iron chef – no, the next cast iron chef!,” he predicts.

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About 4-H

4-H is a community of 6 million young people across America learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. In Alabama, more than 65,000 youth participate in a variety of programs, competitions and activities to learn the essential elements of 4-H – Belonging, Independence, Generosity and Mastery.