**IRON CHEF NIGHT**

**Morgan County 4-H Junior Leaders**

**Some thoughts about this activity:**

1. This took some advanced planning with both youth and adults making good suggestions. It also took some resources from the club’s treasury to provide the ingredients. Many of the lesser-used ingredients (i.e., baking soda, pepper, sugar, etc.) and the equipment were dragged out of one of the advisors’ cupboards, used slightly, and then was taken back home with them. Other things such as grated cheese and canned biscuits were completely used up when it was over.
2. Present a short safety session before you start the activity. We discussed things like hot water, use of electric skillets, watching for others in your path while walking around with something hot, etc. I wish we would have had the kids take off their bulky jackets/coats ahead of time too. In one of the photos we had a boy cooking in a Carhartt coat, but that’s just part of the teenage scenery. This is also a good time to discuss food safety.
3. Be sure the group understands that they are the clean-up crew. This activity takes some time, and cleaning is part of the process of being responsible.
4. Speaking of responsibility, we had a microwave casualty when the fair kitchen’s ancient microwave croaked while the kids were using it. The Junior Leaders treasury contributed half of the replacement cost, which the fair board appreciated.

**Objective:**

To develop a sense of teamwork among the members, and to allow an outlet for creative thinking and decision-making as a group, while learning basic culinary skills.

**Materials:**

Each group had an electric skillet and the utensils listed in the attached spreadsheet. (Iron Chef Needs) We made the ovens, microwave, and stovetop available if needed.

**Directions:**

The crowd was divided into groups of five or six members. Forty minutes were allowed for the groups to get their entrees together and ready for the judges. We were not exact on the time, as some waited in line for the judges to get to their presentations. Somehow in their presentation the secret ingredient had to be used. In observance of Groundhog Day, we declared the secret ingredient to be “ground hog” (sausage). Not many Junior Leaders went to the recipe books—they freelanced, or relied on something they were used to making or helping with at home. Some made meatballs, others made biscuits and gravy, one group made stuffed peppers, and a few were not really identifiable, but the judges were good about it. Adults were quietly circulating to watch how kids worked together and to put out “fires”—which didn’t arise, thankfully. The panel of three judges was made up of volunteers and Extension staff members who were positive and willing to try whatever was set in front of them. Starbucks gift cards were given to the members of the winning team, although winning was not really the object. Encourage your kids to help clean up, and you might let the parents know that this takes some time and the evening could run later than normal.