

“We’ve gone from **feeding** soldiers to **fueling** soldiers.”



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Troops line up for lunch at the Fort Jackson dining hall that has won what officials call the ‘Super Bowl’ of military food-service competitions. The honor, the Connelly Cup, was awarded to the 2nd Battalion, 39th Infantry Regiment.

Army chow takes a bow

Fort Jackson dining hall captures rare award for feeding those who fight

Best chow in the Army

Susanne Kappler
Leader Staff

For the first time in the 41-year history of the Phillip A. Connelly Awards for Excellence in Army Food Service, a Fort Jackson dining facility will take home the Connelly Cup. The 2nd Battalion, 39th Infantry Regiment DFAC will be honored as the best large garrison DFAC Army-wide at a ceremony April 4 in Atlanta.

"It's like the Super Bowl, so you know I'm feeling very good," said Barbara Johnson, the facility's manager. "It was just amazing that we had the opportunity to run and compete — and the fact that we represented Fort Jackson."

The judges visited the DFAC Oct. 28 and evaluated all aspects of the facility's operation, including food preparation, taste, nutrition, service and sanitation. The DFAC has competed for the third straight year and preparations for the 2008

contest started in January.

Michael Heckman, Fort Jackson's food program manager, explained that the experience from the previous years has helped in the preparation.

"We probably focused a lot more on management style, organization, facility appearance and customer service," he said. "We did a lot of improvements this year. It's a great achievement. Everybody stepped up and did a lot of extra work."

One member of the DFAC staff was singled out by the evaluators. Lamont Wright, who has been working as a cook at the DFAC for just more than a year, won the Exceptional Cook Award.

"I haven't been around for so long and for me to get the Exceptional Cook Award — it's an honor," Wright said.

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Lt. Col. Collin Fortier, battalion commander, explained that the DFAC workers are the main ingredient in the facility's success.

"Their hard work and dedication to providing the best service to our Soldiers is evident every day and every meal," Fortier said. "They are not just DFAC workers to us — they are part of the team that transforms civilians to AAA-O Soldiers. Sure, our DFAC looks nice, but the secret is the awe-

some staff that works there. Now the rest of the Army knows how good our DFAC staff is."

Preparations for the 2009 competition will get under way soon.

"I brought (the employees) in and asked them, 'How does it feel to be the best?' And they said it was an honor. They were just excited," Johnson said. "I said, 'Well, we're getting ready to go again.'"

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