Cultural diversity through food

One of the first things I have noticed on the SUNY Geneseo campus was the lack of cultural diversity. Where I come from, open-mindedness and cultural pride are essential in becoming a well-rounded individual. Getting far in life was always considered important but always recognizing where I came from was always most important. Being a city kid, I was always accustomed to environments rich with cultural diversity. Simply traveling from one side to the other, I could absorb music, try foods, and hear languages from various regions of the world. Coming from a long line of amateur food enthusiasts, I attempted to bring a little bit of home to the Geneseo campus. I spoke to my Resident Director about having a “hall-wide” cultural dinner. Students from various backgrounds would have the opportunity to show off their true colors and share one of their very own native dishes from back home.

Unfortunately, the staff of my residence hall did not have the funding or time to coordinate such an event. However, as the fall semester progressed, I found out about the school wide “intercultural dinner” at Geneseo. All the culture groups on the campus had the opportunity to give the students on campus a taste of the different cultures Geneseo students represent. Each culture group also put on a performance. As part of the Geneseo’s Latino student association, I got the opportunity to perform in front of a live audience as for the first time well as make a dish well known amongst Latino culture. The dish we decided to serve was cheese empanadas which are considered a common Latino dish. Empanadas are made from fried dough that is seasoned and stuffed with either meat, cheese, or both. The dish was served along with many other kinds of foods from various cultural backgrounds providing a unique experience that immerses students in culture through food.

Besides performing for the first time in front of an audience I took pride in introducing my fellow students to a culture that is not so common on campus. Being a part of promoting cultural diversity on campus is definitely something I can be proud of. Although it wasn’t drastic, this definitely made an impact on the way students here view other foods among different cultures. I think cultural diversity is essential to every learning environment because it spurs open-mindedness. This characteristic is key to becoming successful in this changing society. Along with me participating in this project because of my pride in culture, I simply enjoyed the break from the food on campus and spent some time learning about other cultures on campus beside mine. That night was indicative of what students of various backgrounds have to offer to a college campus. Participating in the annual intercultural dinner was definitely one of the college memories I can take with me as I move on in life.

I'm sorry I missed it this year!