Report from attending two specialty sugar classes in Belfort France with Stephane Klein

Goal:

My goals for this trip was to learn new skills in sugar blowing and sculpture work as well as the traditional methods of making confectionaries that never I have never had the opportunity to learn in any other pastry courses I have attended.

Outcome:

I traveled to Belfort France and spent twelve days attending two different classes. The first six-day class I attended was the confectionary class. I was taught traditional methods for making ribbon and rock candies, licorice, caramels, and filled pate de fruit. We took many of those old traditional candy making methods and modernized the way they were finished and displayed. The second class was sugar blowing and sculpture class. The outcome of that class was that we made four different “ikebana” type sugar pieces over six days. I was taught four different flowers, we made different colors of ribbon and new methods of putting together the four pieces. By participating in these classes it gave me the opportunity to be a “student” and to be able to reflect on how my teaching style affects the student that I teach. During the confectionary class there was two full days that we stood and observed for 8 hours and it made me reflect during those days how it is important to keep the students moving and engaged by doing part of the procedures. Another important reminder for me was that because I instruct many international students it was a “check-in” for me to remember that it is important to have clear instructions not only verbally but in written form. Both of the instructors that I took the class with were only French speaking, my verbal French is not strong but because I had the recipes for the days I was able to prepare the night before by translating so that I could better grasp what was going on during the day of production. If I had not been able to do the reading prior to the class I may have not been able to participate as fully as I did.

Looking forward:

* I would like to work with other instructors on group projects to make pieces for special functions that the culinary and professional bake team participate
* I will incorporate the knowledge into my course learning outcomes when instructing the diploma courses
* To collaborate with the other pastry and culinary instructors to incorporate some of the different techniques that I was taught during these classes
* Start a sugar club that students are able to drop in and work on their skills