Cupcake Chemistry

**STUDENTS FASCINATED BY** the science behind baking had the opportunity last spring not only to try new recipes for some tasty treats but also to learn about the chemistry that goes into making them.

A class called *Chemistry of the Cupcake* looked at the science behind bread making, ice cream production and molecular gastronomy—or in layman’s terms, the physical and chemical transformations that occur when ingredients are cooked (how different cooking temperatures affect eggs, for example).

Taught by chemistry major Stephanie Murray ’13, the *Good Eats meets D.C. Cupcakes* class encouraged students to think about how science affects their everyday lives.

The class was offered through a new two-year pilot program called IDEAS (Integrating Democratic Education at Stonehill), which puts students in front of the classroom, leading discussions on a wide range of topics with their peers.

The brainchild of Hailey Chalhoub ’13 and Assistant Professor of Sociology Christopher Wetzel, IDEAS seeks to foster student engagement and encourage the sharing of ideas between students.

“Our thought was that a program like IDEAS would foster engagement by encouraging a love of ideas, recognizing the depth of knowledge students possess and emphasizing the importance of being challenged by classes,” says Wetzel, who hopes IDEAS courses will be a permanent offering at Stonehill. “It provides students with such a unique opportunity to be engaged teachers and learners.”

To help guide the student-teachers, Chalhoub and Wetzel held weekly seminars where they discussed teaching practices and strategies for engaging students.

As part of IDEAS, a program that gives students the opportunity to teach, Stephanie Murray ’13 [above] taught a one-credit course on the *Chemistry of the Cupcake*.

**Upcoming Spring IDEAS**

In the second year of its pilot phase, the IDEAS program will present another broad range of classes.

In addition to *Chemistry of the Cupcake*, which returns for a second time, here are some of the upcoming courses:

• **Action and Mystic Rituals**, which will integrate the study of positive thinking techniques with rituals from various religions to gain a deeper knowledge of the mind, body and spirit while encouraging mindful action.
  
• **Nerd Culture**, which will seek to examine the origins and popularity of pop culture movements past and present.
  
• **Daily Exercise and Health**, which will assist students in taking a more proactive role in maintaining a healthy lifestyle through exercise and diet.

—Kristen Magda