

Where there's a Will there's a way

SMART START THINKS IT WAS FRANKIE LAINE AND THEN, MUCH LATER, THE BEASTIE BOYS, WHO SAID: "HEY GOOD LOOKIN', WHAT YOU GOT COOKIN'?' HOW 'BOUT COOKIN' SOMETHING UP FOR ME." WHOEVER IT WAS, THEY MAY AS WELL HAVE BEEN SINGING ABOUT CRAIG WILL. SMART START LOOKS AT WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A CHEF.

Craig Will's Year 8 food technology teacher at Scotch Oakburn College in Launceston can take the credit for turning on a switch inside Craig that lit up a sign that said: "Hey, I could be a chef!" Since then, Craig started looking for as many foodie opportunities as possible.

Craig decided that, because he had a clear career-path, the best thing would be to start travelling it. So Craig left school at the end of Year 11 with his sights set on a cooking career.

"I went out and got a couple of kitchen-hand jobs and signed up for introductory courses at TAFE," says Craig, 23.

Craig liked the adult learning environment at Drysdale TAFE, picked up good skills and was learning quickly on the job too.

But he was still keen on landing an apprenticeship.

"I went through the phone book and sent out letters to heaps of restaurants in Hobart and Launceston."

Meanwhile, he let everybody he knew that he was looking for an apprenticeship. It helped. A family friend who is in the hospitality industry came through for him.

"He kept his ears open for me and heard about an apprenticeship at Hobart's Hotel Grand Chancellor."

"The chef said he didn't normally take on first-year apprentices but he gave me a trial and it paid off."

A commercial kitchen is a finely tuned machine; sometimes a

chef might put a prospective employer into that machine to see how they perform with all the other components. Craig training and attitude helped him do well.

Craig was at the plush hotel for almost four years, gaining experience in all aspects of the industry and the kitchen.

After his apprenticeship, Craig took the position of commis chef – the next rung up the long kitchen ladder – at the hotel for about a year before deciding it was time to move on and gain experience in a different environment.

A time in Adelaide gave him different skills, but he and his girlfriend then decided to move back to Tassie.

He climbed up that kitchen ladder – to sous chef – before landing his dream job as chef de partie at top Hobart restaurant, Marque IV.

So what sort of things does Craig do? At Marque IV there's three kitchen 'stations' – grill, fish and larder – each with their own chef de partie. When *Smart Start* spoke to Craig he was in charge of the fish station. He has responsibility for all menu items containing seafood. He was just about to dream up the special of the day using, of course, the freshest Tassie catch. What was it? Well, he was thinking about fresh stripy trumpeter with the skin left on so it crisps up after pan-frying, served on herb-pasted potatoes with a balsamic vinegar reduction and

USE YOUR NETWORKS

Craig was having trouble finding an apprenticeship, but he used all the networks available to him. He spread the word and one of his parents' mates kept his ears open and used his contacts to give Craig an introduction. Always remember, many people are stronger than one. People know people and they know people. And people are often willing to give someone they know a break.

WILL'S KEY CAREER STEPS

- Had his sights set on a cooking career.
- Got kitchen-hand jobs and signed up for TAFE.
- Let EVERYONE know he was looking for an apprenticeship and his network helped get him a trial.
- Did apprentice and gained loads of experiences.
- Travels with his work, loves it and does it with passion.

The international world of kitchens

THE CHEF PECKING ORDER MIGHT LOOK LIKE THIS

Executive chef

The executive or head chef or just plain old 'chef' is in charge of everything, including the menu and personnel management. The executive chef can pretty much do what they want.

Chef de cuisine

The chef de cuisine's placement within the kitchen can vary depending on the individual restaurant's hierarchy. Generally, it is equivalent to an executive sous chef position.

Sous chef

The sous chef (French for 'sub chief') is the direct assistant of the executive chef. Larger kitchens often have more than one sous chef, each covering a certain shift or having his or her own area of responsibility, such as the banquet sous chef, in charge of all banquets, or the executive sous chef, in charge of all other sous chefs.

Expeditor

The expeditor – a role generally held by the sous chef – serves as the liaison between the customers in the dining room and the line cooks. With the help of proper coordination and timing, they make sure that the food gets to the waiters in a timely fashion, so that everyone sitting at a particular table is served simultaneously.

Chef de partie

Also known as a 'station chef' or 'line cook', is in charge of a particular area of production. In large kitchens, each station chef might have several cooks or assistants. But in most kitchens, the station chef is the only worker in that department. Line cooks are often divided into a hierarchy of their own, starting with 'First Cook', then 'Second Cook', and so on as needed.

Commis chef

In larger kitchens, each station chef would have cooks and assistants that help with the particular duties.

Apprentice chef

Learning the ropes and doing what's required.

Escuelerie

This is from a 15th century French word meaning ... dishwasher.

OTHER GUYS

Sauce chef or saucier

Prepares sauces, stews, and hot hors d'oeuvres, and sautéed foods to order. This is usually the highest position of all the stations.

Fish cook or poissonier

Poisons people. No, just joking, actually prepares fish dishes (this station may be handled by the saucier in some kitchens).

Vegetable cook or entremetier

Prepares vegetables, soups and eggs and stuff like that. Large kitchens may divide these duties among the vegetable cook, the fry cook and the soup cook.

Roast cook or rotisseur

Prepares roasted and braised meats and their gravies, and broils meats and other items to order. A large kitchen may have a separate broiler cook or grillardin to handle the broiled items. The broiler cook may also prepare deep-fried meats and fish.

The pantry chef or garde manger

Responsible for cold foods, including salads and dressings, pâtés, cold hors d'oeuvres, and buffet items.

Pastry chef or pâtissier

Prepares pastries and desserts.

Relief cook

Also known as swing cook or tournant replaces other station heads.



Will: at the right station

a rocket and watercress salad. Perhaps also some crumbed squash flowers. Yum!

Craig has words of advice for all those budding chefs who can cook a bit but have never worked in a kitchen.

"Timing is the key," he says. "You have to be in sync with the other chefs. So it's about working smart – you have to be completely prepped up for service, not running backwards and forwards." •

CHECK OUT

- www.marqueiv.com.au
- Skills Tasmania – 1800 804 687; www.skills.tas.gov.au
- TAFE Tasmania – 1300 655 307; www.tafe.tas.edu.au

TIMING IS THE KEY. YOU HAVE TO BE IN SYNC WITH THE OTHER CHEFS. SO IT'S ABOUT WORKING SMART – YOU HAVE TO BE COMPLETELY PREPPED UP FOR SERVICE, NOT RUNNING BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS

GREAT THINGS ABOUT BEING A CHEF:

- Lifestyle – Craig's a night-owl.
- Heaps of really good friends.
- Being creative.
- Variety – Craig's doing something different every day.
- Different ingredients – things come in he's never seen before and he can experiment.

BAD THING ABOUT BEING A CHEF

- Lack of an outside life.