

COOKING UP SOME CAREER OPTIONS

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For Sara Yoshizawa, cooking has always been a way of life. As a toddler in her native Japan, Sara remembers helping out her grandmother in the kitchen. Her best childhood memories took place at a table, surrounded by family and friends. A few years later, at the age of seven, Sara remembers spending her allowance to buy cookbooks.

Sara, now 17, knew she would end up in the trades, especially after having seen all of the programs at last year's Career Options Fair put on by the Richmond School District. She was originally considering the Carpentry Program at Cambie Secondary School. However, Tony Kalf, a now retired teacher with the school district's Career Programs Office, knew of Sara's love of cooking, especially since she was already working as a cook at the Cactus Club. With his help and encouragement, Sara submitted an application for the Cooking Apprenticeship Program at Richmond Secondary School.

The Cooking Apprenticeship Program offers grade 12 students a unique opportunity to gain their level one technical training in cooking, while still earning high school credits. The program is approximately 75% hands-on cooking and 25% theory. The program was first launched in September 2006, under the instruction of Red Seal Chef, Mavis Anthony. Sara loves the hands-on aspect of the program and says, that "when you're out there cooking, you can't fake it – you need to know what you're doing".

Mrs. Anthony noticed that Sara was very driven and wanted to give her an opportunity to excel. With this clear talent for cooking, Sara has just been offered to do a work experience opportunity at the Four Seasons Hotel in downtown Vancouver. On her first day on the job, the hotel was hosting an event called "Kitchen Uncorked", which brought specially invited guests in to mill around the kitchen and mingle with the staff while they prepare and plate a ten-course meal. Sara was immediately given the responsibility of three of those ten dishes and was even given free reign in terms of plating. Despite being terrified on her first day, she dove right in and had a great time. The Four Seasons' Sous Chef, Aaron Brooks says that he is really impressed with the preparation and skills that Sara has - "She definitely has the attitude to become a chef".

Full of life and energy, Sara has many plans and ideas for her future. Her dream is to one day own a chain of restaurants in a variety of cities around the world, and believes that by being in this program, she's already taking steps towards this dream. Mrs. Anthony says that Sara has what it takes to be an executive chef. But before this happens, Sara says she "needs to be satisfied with her knowledge". She freely admits that if it weren't for the program, she'd probably be struggling in school and would not be in a good place - "I would probably be at a dead end right now, if it were not for the program". Apprenticeship programs such as this have not only allowed Sara to believe that her dreams will one day be a reality, they have allowed Sara to believe in herself and live her

love for cooking. “If you don’t love what you do, you’re never going to be good at it” – smart words from a future chef.

All Richmond School District students and parents are invited to come out & see Sara demonstrate her culinary skills at the 4th Annual Career Options Fair, from 3:00 – 8:00 pm, on March 1 at Cambie Secondary School. She and her fellow Cooking Apprenticeship Students will have ongoing cooking demonstrations, as well as compete in a series of Iron Chef Competitions.