

STIRRING UP THE SKILLS FOR A CAREER IN THE KITCHEN

Cooking Apprenticeship Program Gives Future Chefs Good Preparation

(published in the Richmond Review, February 21, 2009)



Christy Carnegie's love of cooking was inspired by her mother. Growing up, time in the kitchen was always a constant. This passion for cooking led her to the Cooking Apprenticeship program at Richmond Secondary School.

The Cooking program, in partnership with Vancouver Community College enables students to achieve their level one apprenticeship training while still in high school. Students gain high school graduation credits for the post-secondary training and also receive this training tuition free.

Carnegie, a grade 12 McMath student is also doing a work experience component at the Cactus Club. She loves the fact that what she learns in the apprenticeship program is put into practice at the

restaurant. Carnegie is currently preparing for the upcoming Skills Canada competition where she will have three hours to prepare a two-course meal using a black box of ingredients.

For Brandon Sleath, another grade 12 McMath student, his love of cooking started a few years ago when he started working in a local Steveston restaurant as a dishwasher. Over time, Sleath worked his way up to cooking and from there his passion was born. Sleath enjoys the hands on aspect of the program and being able to apply what he has learned right away. Sleath is also doing a work experience component at the highly acclaimed West Restaurant in Vancouver's South Granville area. There Sleath helps prep the ingredients and enjoys the fact that he gets to work with ingredients he's never seen before, like truffles. He also likes the concept of using fresh, local ingredients and hopes to open up a similar style of restaurant one day. At West, the standard is perfection – so Sleath says “you have to be mentally strong”, as there is a lot of pressure.

Both Carnegie and Sleath intend on continuing with their training after graduation. This dual credit apprenticeship program gives them a head start towards their career goals.

See Carnegie, Sleath and their fellow students demonstrating their culinary skills at the 6th Annual Career Options Fair, held Thursday, February 26, 2009 at R.A. McMath Secondary School. The event runs from 3-8pm. No admission charge – all are welcome.

Photo details: Pasu Wong (McRoberts) and Tenia Domjan (Richmond High) plate appetizers for a catering event.