

# The Education Edge

A management degree can take your career to new heights. // By Suzanne Hall



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Rebecca Griffin

Culinarians who yearn for top positions, higher pay and restaurant ownership need to have more than the cooking skills attained in culinary school or on the job. Today, financial finesse, including costing, purchasing and other money matters, and soft skills such as employee and vendor relationships and customer service, are necessary for success. Increasingly, chefs and future chefs are turning to culinary programs to provide these skills.

## Back to school

Thirteen years ago, a love of baking led Melissa Ventura to Wegmans Food Markets in Rochester, New York. She started working part time in the bakery and "just blossomed," she says. Although she had a degree in health science, she went to Monroe Community College in Rochester while still working at Wegmans and earned an associate degree in foodservice management and hospitality management. Then she went on to Rochester Institute of Technology and earned a bachelor's degree in those areas.

Ventura gradually worked her way up, and today she is a bakery manager at a Wegmans store where, among other responsibilities, she oversees the work of 30-40 employees. Her goal is to continue to move up to a position at the corporate office or as an area manager.

At school, her classes included basic nutrition, accounting and communications skills. "They have absolutely helped me in my job," Ventura says. "Nutrition, because I make the ingredient labels, and public speaking helps me communicate with employees and customers."

Rebecca Griffin has a bachelor's degree in culinary arts and service management and a master's of business administration. She has worked as a foodservice director and in catering for Aramark, and also has garde manger experience. Now she is an assistant professor and chair in Monroe Community College's hospitality department. "Students come here for their associate degree in hotel management with an emphasis on food and culinary arts," she says.



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Tannis Reinhertz

The college also has a certificate program in culinary arts and another one in food management. Certificates are geared toward working professionals who are interested in food and beverage management. "We prepare them for jobs as food and beverage directors and other jobs that require management skills," Griffin says.

As chairperson of City College of San Francisco's Department of Culinary Arts and Hospitality Studies, Tannis Reinhertz runs a program that offers an associate degree in foodservice management and culinary arts management. The department also offers a degree in hotel management. Reinhertz, a graduate of the department, also has a bachelor's in management and a master's in adult education.

With more than 20 years in various positions in the restaurant industry, she now offers potential and upcoming chefs the tools to advance. "We do get working chefs who come in because of courses such as beverage management, wine and catering management. These have a front-of-the-house focus," she says. "Cooks coming into our program leave with more confidence to be chefs. The program acts as a mentor."

City College of San Francisco, Monroe Community College and Rochester Institute of Technology are just a few of the many schools with culinary programs offering courses of study that provide the skills cooks and chefs want and employers often demand.

## Meeting demand

Recruiters who go to Johnson & Wales University in Providence, Rhode Island, often are looking for students with management skills. "Especially corporate recruiters want students who can run a whole business," says Paul McVety, dean of the College of Hospitality Management.

"Employers look for the ability to communicate, understand numbers in relation to sales and cost control, and knowledge of the front of the house," says Susan Marshall, interim dean of the College of Culinary Arts at Johnson & Wales.

To provide students with the skills they need, Johnson & Wales offers a bachelor's degree in culinary arts and foodservice management. To earn that degree, students spend two years taking courses offered by the College of Culinary Arts and another two years studying in the College of Hospitality Management.

While most of the participants in the program are traditional college-age students, others include those who have already earned an associate degree in culinary arts at Johnson & Wales and are coming back for the management segment. The program also serves "students who have come to the College of Culinary Arts wanting to be great chefs, but after taking the labs, they decide they don't want to be behind the line," Marshall notes. Those students go through the management program and may go into sales and marketing for food, liquor and equipment vendors. Those who want an even greater concentration of management and business skills can go on to earn a master's of business administration with a hospitality concentration.

Will Gilson has an associate degree and a bachelor's degree from Johnson & Wales. He began his restaurant career as a teenager and went on to work in several cooking jobs. At one point, a chef he was working for told him he could do all right working for various chefs, but if he wanted to run a business, he would have to go to Johnson & Wales and get

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Bryce Norblom

helpful courses he took. "It's essential for a chef to have good social skills," he says. "Math also is important. I wish I had taken more math courses."

## A will to learn

Math and finance classes have been important to Bryce Norblom, partner/butcher and sometimes chef at Butcher's Bistro in Denver. He also plays an active role in front-of-the-house operations. A graduate of Colorado State University in Fort Collins with a bachelor's in hospitality management and a minor in business, Norblom went to school planning to make a career in the hotel industry. A stint in a seafood restaurant changed his mind, and when he joined the team at Snooze, a Denver-based restaurant company, he was

convinced. Starting out as a dishwasher and then a sous chef, he worked his way into management as a corporate chef trainer. His education, he believes, helped him grow at Snooze and continues to help him succeed at Butcher's Bistro. "Knowing the business side is a big part of being a chef," he says.

Evelyn Lannak, an assistant professor in the hospitality department at Monroe Community College, began her postsecondary education with a bachelor's in home economics. "I graduated about the time home economics was no longer being taught," she says. So she started a catering business, and soon learned she needed more education. She earned a certificate in culinary arts and catering management

at the Culinary Institute of Charleston in Charleston, South Carolina. "That program taught me how to work smarter, not harder," she says. Later, she earned a master's in education.

Among the courses she teaches are fundamental and advanced food preparation and advanced foodservice management. Her students include those out of high school, career changers, veterans and others. She believes that the courses that Monroe and other schools offer are important, because "chefs and cooks don't pay enough attention to nonculinary skills."

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## The education edge

Many culinarians with degrees turn to education as a career. Chuck Ziccardi is an assistant teaching professor in the culinary arts/foodservice department at Drexel University in Philadelphia. He has extensive experience as a chef

and several degrees, including an associate degree in occupational studies in culinary arts from The Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, and a bachelor's in hotel restaurant management.

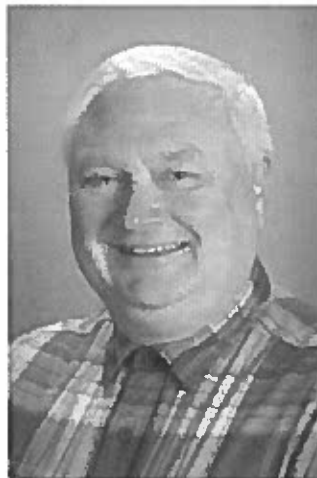
He believes that a degree rounds you off as a professional. And with a management degree, you have the whole industry under your belt and will do your craft better. "A degree also helps you get your foot in the door," he says. "Chef/owners need more than just culinary skills and courses. They need to be able to jump in and do any job in the restaurant."

Drew Lawrence is an associate professor in the hospitality department at Monroe Community College. He started his culinary education at Erie Community College in Williamsville, New York, where he earned an associate degree in culinary arts. He also has a master's in adult education.

He believes that soft skills, including knowing how to deal with people and how to greet customers, is the second most-important talent a chef can have. The first is how to make money. "You can be the best chef in the world," he says, "but if you don't know how to make money, you won't have a job." ■

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Drew Lawrence



SUZANNE HALL HAS BEEN WRITING ABOUT CHEFS, RESTAURANTS, FOOD AND WINE FROM HER HOME IN SODDY-DAISY, TENNESSEE, FOR MORE THAN 25 YEARS.

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