



THE STAR

Media release

Culinary apprentices roll into Easter spirit as hospitality sector hunts for more chefs

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Culinary apprentices at The Star Gold Coast are rolling into the Easter spirit, learning how to make hot cross buns in one of the company's many signature masterclasses, as the state's tourism and hospitality industry continues its hunt for 1,000 additional chefs and cooks.

The culinary masterclasses, aimed at building the skills of the company's next generation of chefs, are provided by The Star Culinary Institute (TSCI) – a partnership between parent company, The Star Entertainment Group, and TAFE Queensland and TAFE NSW.

Since 2012, TSCI has been offering three-year culinary apprenticeships and has seen nearly 140 apprentices graduate nationally, with almost 90 of those from Queensland.

Currently, TSCI is supporting the skills and training of 75 apprentices nationally, including school-based apprentices, with more than half of those (45 apprentices) in Queensland.

It comes as Queensland Tourism Industry Council Chief Executive Daniel Gschwind said there is a growing chef skills shortage in Australia, with currently about 1,000 chef and cook positions vacant in Queensland alone.

"As we rebuild our tourism economy, poised to take advantage of future opportunities, having a highly skilled workforce is critical," Mr Gschwind said.

"Quality culinary experiences across all market segments are an important part of the tourism experience and we need to develop the professionals in hospitality who can deliver that. The Star Entertainment Group is a committed partner in building up this workforce."

The Star Gold Coast COO Jessica Mellor said TSCI enabled The Star Entertainment Group to support the training and employment of future generations of chefs.

"Across the company, most of the apprentices who graduate end up securing roles with The Star – either here at The Star Gold Coast, or at our sister properties in Brisbane and Sydney," Ms Mellor said.

"In 2018/19 financial year, nearly 82 per cent, or 18 of our 22 culinary apprentice graduates across the company, secured work with one of these properties.

“In 2019/20, this figure increased to almost 90 per cent, or 17 of our 19 graduates, with most of these graduating in December 2019 and being offered a role prior to the pandemic hitting in March 2020.

“As we grow through the build of our two new hotel and apartment towers, set to open in early 2022 and in 2024 respectively, we’ll be creating hundreds of roles in hospitality – including in the culinary space – so training our future talent has never been more important.”

Nineteen year old second-year apprentice Mollie Smith said she had her sights set on a nursing career but was inspired to look into the culinary world after TSCI held one of its inhouse apprenticeship competitions at her school.

“I had always studied hospitality as a subject and one of my teachers encouraged me to introduce myself to a representative from TSCI when they came to my school,” Ms Smith said.

“Not long after doing that, I was invited to undertake some work experience at The Star Gold Coast, which I really enjoyed, and this led to starting a school-based apprenticeship.

“Literally two days after I finished year 12, I moved into a full-time apprenticeship position with the property, starting off in the pastry team and haven’t looked back since.”

Nineteen year old second-year apprentice Caelan Hunter said the TSCI offers a wide range of opportunities under one roof, from rotating across different restaurants through to participating in a range of masterclasses, and inhouse and external competitions.

“I’ve been able to rotate across various areas including hot production, cold production, fine dining, pastry, and various a la carte kitchens,” Mr Hunter said.

“I’ve really enjoyed learning about the fine dining side of cooking and that’s where I’d like to end up.

“We also receive opportunities to participate in a range of signature masterclasses and inhouse and external competitions – something you wouldn’t normally get access to elsewhere.

“For example, Mollie and I have become two of 32 apprentices around Australia who have been selected to compete in the 2021 Proud to be a Chef competition in Melbourne during September.

“This will be a great opportunity to win an international culinary scholarship, which wouldn’t have been possible without the encouragement and training of the chefs at The Star who have been great mentors to us.”

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