

Ocean County Vocational Technical School

Working in the Field

Sharing Success Stories



Student: Ryan Schmitt
OCVTS Program: Culinary Arts
Instructor: Dennis Melia
Employer: The Four Seasons Hotel, Denver, CO
Website : www.fourseasons.com

Class of: 2005
Center: Brick
High School: Toms River South
College: Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts

In Ryan's own words: OCVTS provided me an opportunity to receive high school credits, and do something that I enjoyed. At the time, I enjoyed cooking but did not know how far I was going to take it. While attending OCVTS the first year, I went through the rotation culinary, pastries, and front of house. In my second year, I chose to focus on pastry. Dennis Melia was able to provide real world knowledge of what was expected beyond schooling. Chef Dennis was a great supporter and motivator. He pushed me to compete in SkillsUSA and VICA. While attending the vocational school, we volunteered to help culinary events in the community, one of which led me to my first kitchen job. The skills I learned at OCVTS are fundamental building blocks that are required in the industry.

This career is work. You start at the bottom and work hard. You work long hours, and you work when everyone else has the day off. The industry is 24 hours a day, and 365 days a year. Eventually an opportunity to challenge yourself even more will come along, and that is when you become a chef.

OCVTS provided me with an opportunity to work at a local restaurant and participate in an internship program. Both of these experiences help put things into perspective. I realized if I want to work hard, this is a fun industry to be in. OCVTS also introduced the real workings of a pastry kitchen. You do not deal with cups, and teaspoons. It is pounds, ounces and grams, conversion rates, and mixing methods. Having completed the culinary program at the Brick Center set me apart from the rest of my class right through college, and being ahead is a good thing in this industry. You get more opportunities, you are looked at first, but it still all comes down to your inner drive, and how bad you want it.

Last and most importantly, I currently work for one of the most luxurious hotel and resort companies in the world, the Four Seasons Hotel in Denver, Colorado. The opportunities to grow are only limited to my inner drive.

Chef Dennis Melia, Pastry Arts Instructor at OCVTS, was elated to submit Ryan Schmitt as a culinary arts success story. "Ryan was a hardworking, industrious student with drive and self-motivation. When it came time for extra work for a school event, Ryan spent many hours after school to help with a pastry display, chocolate sculpture or a sugar showpiece. I still have a picture of our first place pastry table with Ryan at Chef's Night Out. I remember driving to the school boards convention with our pastry display and Ryan held the chocolate showpiece for the entire ride so it would not break. He always considered the extra work as an opportunity to learn more about the trade. He makes me very proud to be an instructor."



Ryan Schmitt, Pastry Chef Extraordinaire! Check out Ryan's pastry creations at https://imgur.com/user/R_Schmitt87