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Washing dishes in the kitchen as a teenager – and a passion for food – landed former Te Aroha College student Christian a chef's role with one of New Zealand's leading hospitality businesses.

"I love food, I love the people, I love working for something that isn't just myself. I'm definitely suited to the service industry, because I'm service minded and I love delivering the best experience I can to other people."

Christian landed his role with Montana Food and Events after his TA College hospo teacher fuelled the fire of his passion for the industry...

"My teacher gave me everything I wanted in terms of learning and how the diverse the industry is. We got play with all the fancy tool and gas ovens and fire. As well as free lunch everyday if you go in and cook!"

Christian started with Montana as a commis chef – a junior role supporting more senior chefs by cleaning the kitchen and prepping food – and worked his way through the ranks.

To find out more about this sector, profiles of young people like you in the industry, and career tools and tips...

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CHRISTIAN GORE
HEAD CHEF

The FutureForce® Crew sat down with Christian to chat about his role...

- SO, WHAT IS YOUR JOB?

I have recently been promoted to Head Chef after being the Sous for over 12 months. In general, my role is the day to day running of the kitchen and managing the team. Part of that is making sure our work is up to the Executive Chef's standards. We work long hours so we try to have as much fun as we can with each other.

- WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT WORKING AT MONTANA?

I think the one thing I love the most is just how diverse it is. We do everything from a five course degustation for 1,000 people to morning tea for half a dozen to cooking chicken and chips for people going to shows and events.

- WHAT GOT YOU INTERESTED IN THIS PATHWAY? HOW DID YOU GET STARTED?

I went to Te Aroha College and we had a really good hospitality teacher who just fuelled the fire. He gave me everything I wanted in terms of learning and how the diverse the industry is.

TOP CAREER TIP

"IF YOU HAVE THE DRIVE AND STICK WITH IT, YOU CAN BE A QUALITY CHEF. YOU'VE JUST GOT TO HAVE THE RIGHT ATTITUDE. IF YOU'RE WILLING TO PUT IN THE TIME, I'VE NEVER MET A CHEF THAT ISN'T WILLING TO PUT THE TIME INTO TRAINING SOMEONE ELSE."

- WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT YOUR JOB?

The best part of working in an industry like this is that I go to work and get to hang out with some of my best mates. I love getting stuck in and getting my hands dirty. You get into the trenches and you work your way out, you pull off an event that not many could do – and you do it while you're having fun. And I love food! I love food, I love the people, I love working for something that isn't just myself. I'm definitely suited to the service industry, definitely service-minded and I love delivering the best experience I can to other people.

CHRISTIAN GORE
HEAD CHEF

MONTANA
FOOD AND EVENTS



- HOW HAVE YOU OVERCOME SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU'VE FACED?

I think it's important to focus on what you can control. I find that coming in here and writing my prep list down and working through it methodically – you need to be organised and be as prepared as you can. Anything can happen but you can deal with it when you're prepared.

- WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE CONSIDERING A JOB IN THIS INDUSTRY?

Just give it a go. Go into your local café or restaurant and just get a feel for what hospitality is like. I've washed dishes in small places, cooked dinners in big places, served drinks in a bar in Wellington – hospitality is such a diverse industry.

I think a lot of people overestimate how hard it is to be a chef. Don't get me wrong, there's a lot of hours and there can be some fiddly little jobs but for the most part it's really simple as long as you're taught how to do it correctly. If you are taught how to do it properly and you show a little bit of care, you'll go a long way.



WHAT KIND OF PERSON IS SUITED TO THIS TYPE OF WORK?

- Has drive and passion for their work
- Reliable
- Willing to learn
- Team player
- Good listener
- Ability to multi-task
- Excellent time management
- Good with people – leadership potential
- Creative
- Resilient with good stamina

- WHAT'S A DAY IN THE LIFE LIKE AS A HEAD CHEF?

"It can be tough because of the hours and the nature of the service industry. There can be a lot of pressure and a lot of hours but there are many positives as well. You come to work with people from all walks of life and you're with them for eight to twelve hours a day, you become best mates with the people you're working with. I can safely say that the people I'm working with are some of the best friends I've ever had, same as the job before this one.

Day-to-day can be surprisingly boring to most people. It's a lot of preparing for small functions and a lot of monotonous jobs.

There's also lots of planning. I'd probably spend a couple a day thinking about how we're going to do the next week, how I'm going to split the chefs, how I'm going to perform and get all of it done. Rostering, ordering... all of that stuff so that we don't get to service and go "what am I supposed to do now?"

We write a prep list every day and work our way through it methodically until we know that the next day is crossed off. We come in in the morning and we don't leave until that happens."