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## Culinary Internship and the European Mobility Action Plan Part Two: Towards an Understanding of the Culinary Life and Internship

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## **Culinary Internship and the**

### **European Mobility Action Plan Part Two:**

#### **Towards an Understanding of the Culinary Life and Internship**

There is evidence to suggest that France, towards the end of the revolution 1789-1799, was the birthplace of what is now referred to as a 'restaurant.' The restaurant gradually reduced an older aristocratic style of eating which involved skilled cooks employed in households, (Finkelstein, 1989). Glanville and Young (2002:123) indicate that, prior to the France revolution people had essentially three choices: to go to an 'ordinary' where a dish of the day was provided for a set price, along with bread and a drink; to buy ready prepared food from a cook shop or seek an invitation from an acquaintance. Following the revolution many of the cooks, needed to establish other places to work and served meals for the new class, the bourgeoisie, who could pay for their services, a place where they could rest and restore from hunger or fatigue and came to be known as restaurants, (Mennell, 1996; Pitte, 1999; Spang, 2000 and Trubek, 2000). Therefore, a restaurant can be defined as an establishment where 'on-site provision of food represents the main business activity' (Cullen, 2005). The term 'cook' has also evolved and although still ambiguously used by Fines (1996) when referring to the art of professional cookery, is understood in culinary educational institutions and industry to represent different levels of cooking skills. For example, Palmer, Cooper and Burns (2007:312) state:

A focus on the job of chef cooking as a job can mean different things and its status varies according to the type of cooking involved, for example, school meals or restaurant cuisine. Even the job title is a symbolically charged nomenclature; chef denotes a higher status than cook for instance. Whereas between chefs "cook" is not a derogatory term but rather one of praise, a compliment: The highest compliment for a chef is when another chef calls that he's a good cook. It would be an insult for a civilian to say "oh, are you the cook"? To a chef that would be a terrible insult, but if

another chef says about you behind your back, “dude, that guys a really great cook”. That would be the highest praise.

Therefore, the term ‘cook’ can refer to a person who might not be professionally trained but is cooking food for a living, he or she would not working in a professional culinary setting. Professional cookery relates to the chefs demonstration of attributes such as their: culinary skills, knowledge of ingredients, products, and having an attitude that strives towards achieving the goals of the kitchen brigade, (White and Steen, 2006). Fine (1996) claims that ‘cooks’ (chefs) like many occupations embedded within culinary organisations demand teamwork and coordination to enable the restaurant attempt to present complex meal experiences for their patrons, and achieve the organisational goals. According to Fine (1996:85), cooks (chefs) need to ‘learn how to put up with burns, cut and injuries. Those are the things nobody likes but those are the sacrifices that you make to become a cook,’ (chef). ‘A chef’s role begins when the work of nature including farmers, fishermen, craftsmen, food processors microbiologists/food scientists, culinologists and molecular gastronomists ends,’ (Hegarty, 2008:1). Bourdain (2007:66) claims, in a kitchen, ‘It’s not really esprit de corps. One person is in charge. You can’t have a hippie commune in the kitchen, where everyone is giving their input.’ According to Bourdain (2007:66), the kitchen is always going to be an ‘autocratic society, with a certain militaristic aspect to it.’ However, in contrast to Bourdain experience of a kitchen environment, Marco Pierre White said:

I found myself working for a chef who was soft and inquisitive. He was a man who actually asked for my opinions and who wanted to know about my passion for food. In fact, Raymond Blanc was so enthusiastic and encouraging that I discovered a sense of freedom, and that is when my confidence started to grow. It seemed as if I done painting by numbers and now I was being given a blank canvas, (White and Steen, 2006:87).

In addition to Marco Pierre White’s above excerpt, Georges Auguste Escoffier (28 October, 1846 – 12 February, 1935) who was a French chef, restaurateur

and culinary writer that popularised and modernised traditional French cooking methods, and is regarded as one of the great chefs of his time (Kinton and Ceserani, 2007). Escoffier suffered from bullying and verbal abuse as a commis chef and vowed to professionalise his kitchen and ensured that all his staff was treated with respect and insisted that they be polite to one another (Kraig, 2006). Escoffier preferred to leave the kitchen if he felt he was losing his cool and return when he had calmed down to deal with any issues (Page and Kingsford, 1971). Escoffier was also renowned for running a militaristic style kitchen. For example, Herbodeau and Thalamas (1955:79) claim that Escoffier advocated ‘Taylorism’ in the kitchen. According to Mac Con Iomaire (2009:139), Escoffier arranged his kitchens into five equally supporting parties: ‘garde-manger’ responsible for looking after the cold dishes and supplies for all of the kitchen; ‘entremetiers,’ for soups, vegetables and desserts; the ‘rôtisseur’ with responsibility for roasts, grilled and fried dishes; a ‘saucier’ for the making of sauces; and a ‘pâtissier’ who made all the pastry dishes for service. This system became known as the Escoffier’s brigade system.

There is evidence illustrating the impact Escoffier had on modern culinary practices via the movement of chefs who were in search of culinary experts to work with and from whom they could gain knowledge and skills. For example, the British were enthusiastic consumers of French haute cuisine with up to five thousand French chefs living and working in Britain by 1890 (Mac Con Iomaire, 2009 and Trubek, 2000). It is also evident from the literature that many French chefs worked in Ireland in the 1900s for example, the first named French chef linked with Dublin during the nineteenth century is Alfred Suzanne, (Mennell, 2006:160 and Trubek, 2000:77). Alfred Suzanne, born 1829 in Normandy arrived in Dublin in 1847, during the Famine, to work as chef in the kitchen of the Earl of Clarendon, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (1847-1852) (Anon, 1896). In the subsequent forty years Alfred Suzanne spent in Ireland and

England he also worked for the Earl of Wilton and the Duke of Bedford (Trubek, 2000:77). Alfred Suzanne was one of the top French chefs who collaborated with Escoffier on *Le Guide Culinaire* (Mennell, 1996:160). The movement of chefs in search of culinary expertise to increase their skills and influence their careers is a well-documented feature of culinary life, what follows is two brief illustrations of this characteristic nature of chefs.

Michel (1858-1931) and Francois (1853-1940) Jammet were born in St. Julia de Bec, near Quillan, in the French Pyrenees to Barthelemy, farmer, and Catherine (née Bourell), (Mac Con Iomaire, 2005). The two Jammet brothers, aged 12 and 17 respectively, were forced to leave home finding work first in Perpignan and then in Paris where they trained as chefs (Mac Con Iomaire, 2009). Michel Jammet first came to Dublin in 1887 as chef before moving to London in 1891. Following four years working in London for Lord Cadogan, Michel Jammet returned to Dublin to work as head chef at the Viceregal Lodge, when Lord Cadogan became Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (Mac Con Iomaire, 2006:218). In 1888 Francois became head chef of the 'Café de Deux Mondes', Rue de La Paix, Paris, and then moved to the 'Boeuf a La Mode', Rue de Valois, Palais Royal. In 1900 Michel and François Jammet bought the Burlington Restaurant and Oyster Saloons at 27 St Andrew Street, Dublin renaming it 'The Jammet Hotel and Restaurant' in 1901 (Mac Con Iomaire, 2005).

Frederick. Macro was born in Sudbury, England to a father who was a confectioner and caterer. Frederick apprenticed in Paris at the Maison Gage, and later served under two presidents of the Société des Culinaires Française before returning to London to become second cook at the Russian Embassy, (Anon, 1896c:2). Frederick spent some time as a private chef in Scotland, worked in the Officers Mess in Edinburgh Castle, chief cook on P&O's SS 'Pekin' where he travelled to Calcutta, Bombay, China and the Australian Colonies. He returned

to London, taking charge of the kitchens of the Albion Tavern in Covent Garden. Following six years as chef at the North Devon Ilfracombe Hotel, Frederick became chef at the newly opened Grand Hotel in Belfast, (Mac Con Iomaire, 2009; Anon, 1896c:2).

It is evident from those excerpts and illustrations' that a restaurant kitchen environment can offer many different experiences and with varying numbers of chef in the brigades. For example, the brigade in the Hyde Park Hotel located in London, had a large kitchen that included a 'Head chef, five sous chefs (second in command), three chefs on fish, three on meat and sauce, three on pastry and four on the larder. There were chef de partie, the premier commis chefs and the commis chefs,' (White and Steen, 2006:206). In contrast, Harveys a two Michelin starred restaurant in London, had rarely more than eight chefs in the kitchen brigade (White and Steen, 2006). Because the kitchen environment was so small Harveys needed to have the right number of staff to allow a chef the enough cramped space to prepare the dishes, (White and Steen, 2006:205). However, common to all kitchens is a sort of classical hierarchy brigade system that requires competent chefs and waiters, (Hegarty, 2008; Jones, 2005; White and Steen, 2006; Fine, 1996 and Palmer, et. al., 2007).

## **Kitchen Brigade System**

It could be argued that the relationship between Escoffier's Kitchen Brigade System and students undertaking culinary internships has a direct impact on the social categorisation process and the students' integration into the kitchen system. Escoffier's development of a system of work that introduced organised discipline into kitchens still permeates many French kitchens today and can be found in simplified versions throughout Europe and other international kitchens. Brigade de Cuisine is a system of hierarchy found in restaurants and hotels kitchens regardless of their size (White and Steen, 2006). The modern concept of the Brigade System is still evident in culinary arrangements requiring discipline and skill to meet the demands of the kitchen. For instance, my visit to Le Mas Candille during the summer of 2008, a Michelin-starred restaurant located between Cannes and Grasse in France, revealed a kitchen structure that mirrored Escoffier's Brigade System. The kitchen staff consisted of fifteen chefs including Serge the Chef du Cuisine or Executive Head Chef, a second Head Chef or Sous Chef, and a number of Chef de Parties working with a commis chef and stagiaires (a person undertaking a short period of unpaid training) for each section in the kitchen. A similar structure was found in the Le Manoir Aux Quat'Saisons in Great Milton, Oxfordshire. This is a two star Michelin restaurant which also incorporates a country house employing thirty-four chefs, including commis chefs and stagiaires in the kitchen. The restaurant is owned by the Orient Express Hotel group and the celebrated chef in the culinary arena Raymond Blanc. Each member of the brigade had a specific role within the structure of the kitchen system.

Hegarty (2008) purports that, the chef's role is much more than the end producer of a meal, for example, a cook. The professional chef's role involves the 'science selection, the technology of preparation, processing, cooking and the artistic design,' in a restaurant environment, (Hegarty, 2008:1). Jones (2005) concurs with Hegarty (2008) by claiming that chefs' engage in three roles: 'production, research and managerial duties in a kitchen. Jones (2005) identifies eleven key competences that may be used to personify the role of a chef: (1 time management, (2 knowledge of culinary operations, (3 skilled at food presentation, (4 knowledge of products, ingredients and their functionality, (5 knowledge of kitchen function and pressures, (6 understanding food testing, (7 ability to work in a multi-task environment, (8 ability to make decisions, (9 knowledge of quality assurance and food safety, (10 general communications skill, and (11 ability to distinguish levels of quality in food products. The chef in close collaboration with the waiter is the end producer of the meal experience. A trained waiter is a person that has,

Extensive knowledge of international cooking, beverages, restaurant and bar services techniques. The waiter is the most important contact person in attending the restaurant customer. It is therefore necessary that the waiter has a complete command of serving rules and can demonstrate the preparation and service of special flambé and other dishes, and drinks at the guests' table. Basic requirements are skill and resourcefulness, good manners, aplomb and practical ability. (Cullen, 1999:10)

Relating to competent chefs and waiters, Eraut (1994) claims that individual's must demonstrate an integration of attributes, knowledge 'know how' and performance 'can do,' before they demonstrate competence. Eraut (1994) also identifies the term competency as an element of vocational competence, whereby the individual demonstrates performance (e.g. culinary and service skills) capability in a specific domain, for example, in culinary disciplines. Individual's that demonstrate specific skills or elements of knowledge relevant to their professional practice may be deemed to have demonstrated competence (Eraut, 1994). Therefore, the term competence as used in this study refers to the



demonstration of combined or integrated attributes related to culinary performance and knowledge. Cheetham and Chivers (2001) and Paloniemi (2006) suggest that competence and expertise is one of the most valuable assets of individuals, organisations and societies. Chatman and Spataro (2005:321) identified the demonstration competency by an individual, as a factor in the social categorisation process ‘how well employees can exchange knowledge and information and offer distinct competencies for completing group tasks’ (such as those required in a restaurant or kitchen). Palmer et al. (2007:319-320) also note that,

Psychological boundaries of the chef community are constructed by the nature of the work and the routines and task associated with begin a chef. A working environment that spills over into the social arena due to the long and mostly unsocial working hours reinforces belonging... the nature of the work defines the world-view, the values system of the whole community. Belonging is thus established on the basis of a shared history and the disciplinary stigmata referred to earlier (kitchen hierarchy), cuts, abrasions and buns acquired along the way are markers of belonging that identify groups members both to themselves and to each other.

This overview provides some insight into the structure of a kitchen without explaining all sections within a busy culinary environment. In the context of this paper what is important, is the categorisation of the kitchen into sections within a small and often confined space. The kitchen environment is hot and stressful with people working in close proximity to each other, and sometimes tempers flare (White and Sheen, 2006). Each employee is in full view of all other employees working in the kitchen, so the need to demonstrate competence is important in order to gain acceptance as a dedicated culinary student. Orwell (1989) depicted the culinary workplace by stating,

What keeps a Hotel going is the fact that the employees take a genuine pride in the work, beastly and silly though it is. If the man idles, the others soon find him out, and conspire against him to get him sacked. Cooks, waiters and plongeurs differ greatly in outlook, but they are all alike in being proud of the efficiency. Undoubtedly the most workmanlike class and the least servile are the cooks. They do not earn quite so much as waiters, but their prestige is higher and employment steadier. The cook does not

look upon himself as a servant, but as a skilled workman; he is generally called 'un ouvrier' which a waiter never is. He knows his power - knows that he alone makes or mars a restaurant, and that if he is five minutes late everything is out of gear. He despises the whole non-cooking staff, and makes it a point of honour to insult everyone below the head waiter. And he takes a genuine artistic pride in his work, which demands a very great skill. It is not the cooking that is so difficult, but the doing everything to time. (Orwell, 1989:74-75)

Orwell paints a bleak picture of culinary life that would not be representative of most kitchens today. In many ways the images depicted on TV mirror Orwell's kitchen experience and may only be found in a small number of restaurants. A well-known celebrated TV chef demonstrates contempt for his kitchen staff, (see UTV's 'Hells Kitchen') and some of our culinary students have experienced such behaviour during their internship in Ireland. This type of behaviour is contrary to the beliefs of Escoffier. The next instalment will explore the concept of internship as a means of providing opportunities for students to gain *vocational self-concept crystallisation* by working alongside experts in their field of study.

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