



“I thought I could cook before, and now I know I can.”

I've been married for two years and have two kids. I graduated from the training program in May 2002. My youngest son came to the graduation and he tells people all the time, “My dad is a good cook.” It was a really good feeling to see my kids see me achieve something. That was really special to me.

WHEDCO found me a job at FLIK, who placed me as a Prep Cook at Saatchi & Saatchi. I have been here for about a month. I am in charge of the deli counter and am able to do more here than I had at other jobs. The cooks here feel confident

james: prep cook FLIK

in my skills and know that I know how to do things because I was from the Culinary Arts program. I pay attention to proper sanitation and work cleanly at my station. I learned that you have to pay attention to the work of others as well. All this I learned from the Culinary Arts program. It helped me get my foot in the door in this industry.

I learned about WHEDCO from a friend of mine who told my wife about the program. I had been working as a security guard making \$28,000 but was not happy working there. It wasn't something I could see myself doing for a long period of time, and I didn't want to become a miserable person. I liked to cook and I wanted to learn more about it.

I had worked as a cook before at a Turkish restaurant where I moved up from delivery to chef. I also worked at a soul food restaurant doing prep cook work and waiting. But I was not making enough in either of those positions to support my family.

I have a debt to WHEDCO. I learned how to keep food safe and that there are specific methods of cooking everything. I really liked the classes and always felt that the staff there were behind me and would support me if I messed up.

I know I have the basic package to move up and have built on my raw skills. I also have a lot more confidence. I ultimately want to start my own restaurant and small catering company and I really want to go to school part time in the evenings so that I can get my Associates degree as well.

James Brown
Age 28
Graduated May 2002



“I want to help them get their foot in the door because if they experience just a piece of how much I love it, I know they will do fine.”

I started out in the Culinary Arts Entrepreneurial Program in 1998 for about a year and a half. That program helped me set up my business, which I called Marvelous Minis & More in which I did small catering and gift baskets. After that I moved to the vocational training program.

We really learned a lot through trial by fire. You learn there is a method to everything—how to prepare different meats, sauces—it is not as easy as you would think. I also got the chance to meet some really good professional staff members through the program...just some wonderful

janet: kitchen manager WHEDCO at Urban Horizons

talented people.

When I graduated I was offered a position at a three star restaurant, but decided to work at Urban Horizons instead. I wanted to work with other people who were just starting out and were in the position that I once was.

I think the students feel that I understand where they are coming from and have been through before coming here. I grew up in a single parent home, with no money for clothes, and our power would be cut off because we couldn't pay the electric bill. I have been on public assistance. I know I make a difference and change people's perspectives about themselves. People come in with no self-esteem, and they leave here and do really well.

Janet Amely
Age 45
Graduated April 1999



“I had been on welfare all my life, and I am not on it anymore. I feel really good about that.”

I have been working since I was 14 years old. I worked as a security guard for a while, a counselor at a summer camp, fast food, different supermarkets. I had been interested in working in a kitchen and had some experience working as a Food Attendant. I didn't really like it though. The place was in New Jersey and the commute was too long. I was only making \$7.50 an hour and with the commute it didn't make sense.

I got two certificates—one ServSafe certificate and another for graduating the program. I got a knife set, too. I have recommended the program

michelle: prep cook Restaurant Associates

to other people. The staff are really tough on you, which is good because they help you that way. You can't just get a job without training. I kinda had a bad attitude while I was in the program. I didn't think I was going to make it through. They make you more a people person—how to treat people, how to greet people. I smile more now. And the social worker helped me with childcare issues, but mainly with my welfare case.

I found this job myself. It was posted in the Daily News and I went for it. It's good because you get to meet all kinds of people, which I really like. Working in a corporate setting, people are more respectful towards you. In the future I really would like to start my own business called “Food for Thought,” a vendor cart that sells soul food.

Michelle Cromer
Age 24
Graduated May 2002



“I had worked in all kinds of places. I had done all sorts of things, but my life felt a little fragmented.”

I am married now and we just bought a house, so I am a home owner now for the past two years. A friend recommended the program to me. He said that the instructors were really good, and that there was one chef who had a music background and thought that I would really get along with him. I love music and really wanted to further my career in the food industry so I signed on.

I was doing a lot of freelance work and had a lot of work history already. I worked at an advertising agency as a studio manager, different sales positions, and for a company called Unibrew, which

cesar: assistant food service director ARAMARK

specialized in Belgian ales. I just needed to increase my food service knowledge so I could take things to the next step.

I really looked forward to classes every day. I really tried to help other students stay in the program and not give up. You know, telling them to stick with it. I even won an award for Most Enthusiastic. I try to tell people, to achieve your short-term goals you have to hit them one at a time. The training program helped boost my skills, deal with pressure, constructive criticism and time management. I have recommended the program to other people, too.

Since graduating from the program I was placed for a summer at the NYU Kosher Eatery as a Floor Manager, where I got to oversee a staff of eight people and managed the look and general service and maintenance of the cafeteria. I moved on as a Cafeteria Supervisor for a while, then I moved here to the Weinstein Building. I am responsible for maintaining food costs and increasing or maintaining profits, budgets, setting up menus, stock/inventory, purchasing and the quality of the equipment.

Cesar Romero
Age 44
Graduated April 1999