



STRATFORD  
CHEFS  
SCHOOL

Where the  
Best Chefs  
Train SINCE 1983

Becoming  
a Chef  
*a student's story*





## first contact

The Stratford Chefs School looks like a great place to learn to be a chef. I checked out the website: [stratfordchef.com](http://stratfordchef.com).

Apparently the admissions officer can come to my school and do a presentation for teachers, students and/or parents. I also have the option of going to Stratford for a campus tour, which I signed-up for. **It is a two-year program**; each session runs from mid-October until the beginning of March. Between the first and second year **students are required to work in restaurant kitchens to gain experience**. The classes are small and students get to work with top Canadian and international chefs.

 *You will not be able to find another school in the province that teaches you so much in such a compact amount of time.*

Laura Edwards, 2016 Alumna



## personal visit

I spent a day at the Stratford Chefs School. Wow. **The students start at 8:00 in the morning with a four-hour cookery class, taught by a chef from a local fine-dining restaurant.** They have theory courses in subjects like Food Costing and Gastronomy in the afternoon. In the evening they either serve in the restaurant where the second year students are cooking dinner for the public or take another practical cooking class. All student manuals and recipes are on iPads; students use them everywhere. I got to help a couple of students prepare *Entrecôte à la Béarnaise* in Cookery class. They're very precise about everything: measuring, knife cuts, stirring, seasoning.

**I'd love to have skills like these students – and they're only in first year!** The admissions officer took me out to lunch and answered every question I had; my parents were impressed as well. They admit 45 students to the first year of the program. For cooking classes they split into groups, so **there are never more than 15 students in the kitchen at a time.** The chef instructor moves around, watching to make sure the students are preparing their recipes correctly, and coaching them. At the end of cookery classes, they eat all the food they've made. It was delicious! I've decided Stratford is the school for me.



#stratfordON #DTStratford #Stratford356 #SavourStratford



## moving to stratford

Stratford is a small town, very beautiful, with swans on the Avon River and a heritage feel to the downtown core. **You can pretty much walk everywhere.** The school does not have a student residence, but there are lots of places to live in town during the winter, when the theatre is closed. **The school provided a list of potential accommodations.** After contacting the owners/landlords, I visited several and decided to live at a B&B: the rent was reasonable, the room large.



*...few places in Ontario are lovelier and more alive with culture and character*



## preparatory course

Since I did not have the required restaurant experience, I enrolled in the preparatory course – **a ten-day intensive course in cooking basics.**

It gave me a chance to develop my knife skills and gain some confidence in the kitchen. I also got to know a dozen other first year students in the same boat – and became familiar with one of the kitchens in which we will be learning. The instructor was patient and extremely knowledgeable. By the end of the course, I felt ready for school.

**I can't wait to get started!**

## orientation week

During Orientation Week, we learned about Stratford Chefs School (SCS) policies; they are strict about punctuality, attendance, uniforms and academic honesty.

**I now own a set of fabulous knives and an iPad, loaded with all my course manuals.** During the evening welcome event, we got to know each other over food and drinks. I've met lots of people who love cooking and food almost as much as I do! In the first week, we completed the required sanitation course, so we know how to work safely in the kitchen.



## theory classes

Unlike community college programs, SCS offers an enriched program, which includes a range of academic courses in both Levels 1 (L1) and 2 (L2). So when you graduate, not only do you have excellent cooking and service skills, you also understand culinary history, ingredients and nutrition and you know the fundamentals of public speaking, food writing, kitchen management, restaurant design and business plans.

The academic courses include:

**BUSINESS** An introduction to the business management techniques needed to become a professional chef/restaurant owner. I can imagine this information being super useful when I open my own restaurant. (L2)

**COMMODITIES** An in-depth study of individual ingredients. Fascinating. (L1)

**COMMUNICATIONS** How to design and deliver speeches and effectively communicate in the kitchen and dining room (L1 & L2). Terrifying but my confidence has grown so much.

**CULINARY MANAGEMENT** A study of current and historical professional kitchen practice; culinary terminologies and processes; the duties and organization of a kitchen staff. A lot of history, but all kitchen and restaurant related (L1).



**FOOD COSTING** Math as applied to recipes and cost control (L1).

**GASTRONOMY** The history of cooking from the classical era to the early 20th century (L1); food politics and 20th century culinary leaders (L2).

**LAB PACKAGES** A major L2 assignment completed by student chefs for the particular menus they will be preparing for the public.

**NUTRITION** Modern nutritional theory and its application to menu planning in restaurants. Helpful when dealing with diner allergies and food sensitivities (L1).

**RECIPE SPECS** A series of assignments analyzing recipes in detail: a fair bit of work but I understand recipes much better now (L1).

**RESTAURANT DESIGN** A study of restaurant design concepts, which looks at the impact of decor, food and drink presentation, background music, lighting, flowers, style of service and graphics (L2).

**WINE** The fundamentals of wine terminology, service techniques, label information and appellation concepts – also wine tastings(L1 & L2)!

**WRITING** How to write restaurant reviews, food blogs, marketing pitches, menus, cover letters and resumes (L1).



#culinaryleaders



## practical classes

These intensive courses, usually four hours in duration, are taught in groups of 12-15 students per instructor, and include:

**COOKERY** A daily hands-on class in fundamental cooking methods, using classical and modern recipes, taught by experienced practicing chefs. We learn to prepare a vast range of dishes with precision and accuracy (L1 & L2). **Really demanding/exhausting, but worth it.**

**PASTRY** A practical course pastry and bread-making: delicious! (L1 & L2)

**SERVICE** We learn the basics of serving food and wine, how to hold trays and plates, pour wine, and place glasses, cutlery and dishes. **Service is regarded as very important at the school, as it can make or break a restaurant** (L1 & L2).

**LARDER** This is like Commodities, only hands-on, in the kitchen, cooking with the ingredients! The course covers the basics in butchery, fish and shellfish preparation and garde-manger work: pâtés, terrines, sausages, curing, preserving, cold and hot sauces, molecular gastronomy and cheese (L2).



#scsdinner



**RESTAURANT LABS** In Level 2, students work in set groups throughout the year preparing meals that are served to the public. Students rotate through all the kitchen and front-of-house positions three times in the course of the school year. Chef instructors and guest chefs supervise, and **each student gets three opportunities to act as student chef**, organizing and directing activity in the kitchen for that meal. This is the most challenging and exciting part of the SCS experience (L2).



*My favourite thing about Stratford Chefs School was working with peer and Chef instructors with many different histories and experiences.*

Donna Borooah, 2016 Alumna



#culinaryleaders



## dinner labs

Dinners are served Tuesday through Saturday. Pre-prep for dinners begins the night before. Early in the year, the dinners feature simple four course menus that may become SCS Classics. Later on, dinners highlight menus from the restaurants of famous international chefs and visiting chefs. Students are also given the opportunity to create their own dinner menu and execute the service to the public. **The standards for these dinners are very high.** Student performance in the kitchen and the dining room is evaluated by a team of instructors. Students are invited to dine at the Labs three times each year.

## extra-curricular workshops

The school runs Tuesday through Saturday, so our weekend is Sunday and Monday. In addition to the already full schedule, each semester, **students are offered the opportunity to attend extra-curricular workshops on a first come first serve basis.** Workshops are held outside of class time and are a great opportunity to explore a culinary technique in more detail. The workshops change every year but classes may include ethnic cooking (sushi, Mexican or Indian), ice cream making, food styling and charcuterie.



#sscguestchef



## international chefs in residence

Twice a year, the school hosts an international chef for one week. **These chefs in residence, from internationally acclaimed restaurants, design the dinner lab menus and lead the students in the kitchen. It is a chance to learn from chefs at the top of their game.** Some students even manage to obtain stages at their restaurants afterwards!

## canadian guest chefs

For the last few weeks of the year, a series of Canadian Guest Chefs come to the school to showcase their signature menus. **Many of these chefs are SCS alumni who have opened their own restaurants in different parts of Canada.** They are inspirational and it's fascinating to experience their different approaches to food. Students also get a chance to build relationships with these chefs and open the possibility of working in their restaurants after graduation.

## joseph hoare gastronomic writer in residence

All of the SCS students are passionate about cooking but some are also keen on writing. **Every year an acclaimed food writer comes to the school for two weeks to share his or her expertise with the students.** We get a chance to hone our writing skills on various projects and the writer-in-residence provides us with feedback.



#culinaryarts



## events

Throughout the year students participate in various events. Needless to say, most of these feature foods prepared and served by the students. It provides us with an opportunity to gain professional experience in different venues.



*Stratford Chefs School  
taught me kitchen  
skills, teamwork and  
to trust my own  
creativity*

Angie Mohr, 2016 Alumna





#communityevents



### SEASON OPENER

Just before classes start, patrons of the school are invited to an informal event to launch the season. Level 2 students are guests at this event. We get to eat and drink and mingle with folks who are regular diners at the Labs. A fun evening for all!

### FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Throughout the year the Stratford Chefs School community joins together to host fundraising functions for the school. Collaboratively students, staff, faculty and board members participate to host and execute these exquisite events. Multi-course meals and auctions are a must.

### CANADA COOKS THE BOOKS

Hosted by Taste Canada, three lucky students are selected to participate in this competition in Toronto, cooking a recipe from a new cookbook.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS

Every year, the school volunteers itself to help with local events in our community. Whether it is roasting nuts at the Outdoor Christmas Market Downtown or selling pastries at the Slow Food Perth County Sunday market, we are always looking for ways to meet new people and grow the good food community.



## graduation

Graduation takes place in early June. Many of us have been away working for a few months by then, so it's a chance to reconnect with classmates and, of course, get our diplomas! We elect a class valedictorian at the end of the school year and the ceremony closes with that person's speech. **Our celebration began with the sparkling wine and hors d'oeuvres immediately after the class photograph and continued for some time... elsewhere. We'd made it!**



#stratfordchefalumni



## alumni

Now I am part of the school's amazing network of alumni, who work in restaurants across the country. These contacts will be so helpful as I build my career; I can't wait to meet people who've trained at the school and gone on to become great chefs.

*The Stratford Chefs School was a life-changing experience. It's where the best chefs train.*

# Where the BEST CHEFS train

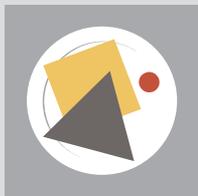
The Stratford Chefs School is an internationally renowned private, non-profit educational institution. Established in 1983, the Stratford Chefs School has set the standard of excellence for culinary training in Canada, graduating over 700 alumni who now contribute to our distinctive Canadian cuisine. Our unique program provides students with a thorough grounding in the theory and practice of classical cuisines and the business elements of operating successful restaurants in today's market. The Stratford Chefs School is one of Canada's most successful and respected culinary institutions and is continually evolving to meet the needs of its students and the culinary community.

To learn more about becoming a student at the Stratford Chefs School please contact:

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Follow us on social media for the latest updates on visiting chefs, special events, weekly menus and more.

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