

VANCOUVER



David Hawksworth's advice for young chefs

An interview with the veteran chef behind Hawksworth Restaurant in honour of VCC's 50th anniversary.

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By Ashley Sparrow / Photo: Hawksworth Restaurant



Since 1965, Vancouver Community College has fostered countless artisans who have gone on to influence the culinary scene of our city. To commemorate its 50th anniversary, the VCC Foundation is set to host a gala featuring 50 of VCC's highest-achieving students, faculty members, and alumni (along with their gastronomical masterpieces). Among this distinguished group is well-known culinary figure David Hawksworth. Chef and owner of Hawksworth Restaurant at the Rosewood Hotel Georgia, Hawksworth's contemporary Canadian cuisine is renowned for its fusion of carefully sourced ingredients and European techniques. This seasoned chef (and native Vancouverite) reflects on his apprenticeship years and offers pearls of wisdom to budding culinary luminaries.

How did you end up in the field of culinary arts? What made you want to become a chef? Growing up I was surrounded by good cooks in the family and developed a love for food. While in high school I naturally gravitated toward restaurants and got a job working in the kitchen.

Who is the most inspiring (or enviable) chef you have worked with? I would say **Marco Pierre White**—highly skilled and very Machiavellian. It was quite the combination.

Where were you working while you were doing your apprenticeship at VCC? I managed to have three different restaurant jobs at the same time: Le Crocodile, Il Giardino and Villa del Lupo.

What was your worst injury? Through all the tough kitchens I've worked in, with all the long hours plugging away during service, I've nicked various bits of my hands and can't count the numerous burns.

What was your worst cooking disaster? You name it, I've done it. I can clearly remember roasting a tray of ducks till they resembled charcoal. Everyone got a good laugh from that.

What was your first triumphant dish? Sometimes the best dishes are made with the simplest ingredients. For me, it was gnocchi I made at home with a classic tomato and basil sauce.

What was the harshest criticism you received? Probably getting roasted by Raymond Blanc of Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons on a fairly regular basis—that was an incredibly hard kitchen to work in. At the Canteen (a restaurant by Chef Marco Pierre White), the co-chef was Tim Hughes; I can't repeat anything he said one service. The 80-hour work week got to everyone.

What was the hardest technique to master? Being 100 percent organized for dinner service day in and day out.

How did the Hawsworth Young Chef Scholarship come about? I was inspired by the Roux brothers in the UK (Albert and Michel Roux, who established **The Roux Scholarship**) and wanted to build the same sort of enthusiasm for cooking that they have. After Hawsworth Restaurant had opened I felt it was time to help talented young Canadian chefs. I believe we have some great restaurants in Canada, and I would like to see even more in the future.

As a successful chef, what one piece of advice would you give to those who are just starting their culinary careers? You can't work enough, and you can't read enough. Don't hop around jobs. Work for great chefs that inspire you. Lastly, have a five- and a ten-year plan.

Are you nostalgic at all for the time you spent at VCC? Yes, when I went to do my apprenticeship there I immediately felt at home. No pretense and great instructors.

