

Cook Studio Catering: Creating jobs and happy customers!

Cook Studio Foodservices

Cook Studio Foodservices and its catering and foodservices division is making quite a name for itself in the city in a very short space of time. Since the catering division opened in May 2002, it has grown greatly – mainly by word of mouth. I had the pleasure of meeting with the Director of Catering and Foodservices, Richard Rheaume. He is an affable fellow and highly energetic. He gets a real charge when talking about the program he runs and how it helps others. There are two components to the program: one is for adults who are on income assistance and the other component is for youth-at-risk. The youth-at-risk area is where Richard spends most of his time. It is not enough to train a youth to be job ready but to be person ready – this includes training in life skills, and attitude adjustment with focus not on the past but on the present and future.

The program itself seems quite exhaustive, all of the trainees learn all of the rotations of a kitchen and its functions so after a very comprehensive 6 months of training not only are they employment ready but they are ready to be involved in any facet of kitchen work. Some young students find that they love making appetizers and desserts and others find that they enjoy putting together platters with the presentation element at work. Whatever the preference of the youth, they are prepared and trained in the fine art of catering. Some of the students will actually do their practicums at fine hotels in the city or they will do their practicums at the facility where they are trained. Richard is proud to note that his catering program has a strong component of Social Enterprise for he prefers to hire from his student base after they have graduated. The team with whom he works is obviously a great one for there were letters of recommendation from clients he has served in the past.

A growing component of his catering business is the wedding market, apparently it is a very difficult market to get into and actually have as a constant within

the catering industry. A portion of a letter written by a happy bride reads: "Many guests approached me during and after the wedding and proclaimed to me that it was the *best wedding food they've ever had!*" The letter goes on to say: "...the wait staff at the reception were extremely professional, polished and friendly and they made every effort to satisfy the needs of our guests." Another emerging market for Cook Studio Food Services is the New Business Openings, continued growth in this market seems very promising and Richard and his team look forward to the opportunities that lay ahead.



As the business has grown Richard has hired one of his graduates from the youth-at-risk program full time. The young lady who was hired told me that prior to receiving the training with Richard and others that she had been involved as a telemarketer and did not really see much into the future. Now she is Richard's assistant and is really enjoying the catering element, making wedding cakes, and being involved in the serving end of things and working with people. He hopes to hire more and more of the graduates and believes this will happen as the catering business continues to grow. Another component to his catering has been the development of the corporate sector. This has been really rewarding for the team of caterers. The consistent comments are in relation to the price and excellent food quality that is supplied.

Cook Studio Catering: Creating jobs and happy customers!

Xenon Genetics is a privately owned science company who has hired Richard and his catering team to cater *all* of their catering needs. Pat Watson, Senior Director of HR and Administration says: "Our work is to benefit people and so is Richard's and it's a nice match." Xenon is particularly impressed by the excellent quality of the food and their staff is really impressed with the social venture aspect of the operation; Pat Watson says, "when I read about his helping others out, we decided that we wanted to be part of the solution too." Xenon is a very happy corporate client.

Another corporate client is Pivotal. Leslie Castellani, Director of Corporate Communications for Pivotal Corporation, has this to say about Richard and his catering enterprise: "They are a fantastic company and everybody agrees that they are fantastic to work with." The consistent comment is the wide variety of high quality food that is nutritious and that clients really enjoy and feel that they had a part in requesting. "So many catering companies may make foods that are quick and easy for them to deliver but they are not necessarily health conscious for the client whereas the food Richard and his team deliver are made with us in mind... the pricing is excellent and 99% of orders are customized to Pivotal's needs and delivered with great value." The verdict is in. The food and service are excellent; the pricing competitive; and people are being helped at the same time.

Before my conversation with Pivotal's Leslie Castellani ended she said: "I highly recommend them. I am thinking of using them for my personal events." Another very happy client, indeed.

For further information contact Richard Rheaume, Director of Catering and Food Services: Phone: **604-696-9096** Fax: **604-696-9097**

To view some catering samples and company background, see: www.foodandservice.net

