

Who is Doing What

## VWS Alumni Corner

Interview with Matthew Cooke

Class of 2006



"Where's  
Matt"?



**VWS:** Tell me about your work and education after graduating from the VWS.

**MC:** After graduating, I attended Capilano University with the intent to get a degree in Human Kinetics. I also decided to get a job at Earls Restaurant; I wanted to make some money and I enjoyed cooking, so it was a good fit. As my time at school progressed I stumbled through my first two terms, only enjoying half of my courses. I did well in the courses I enjoyed and not so well in the others. In retrospect I believe that I was not ready to be back in school; I wasn't mature enough, I wasn't sure what I wanted to study, my motivation was not strong enough, and it felt like I was only there because it's what your supposed to do after graduating high school. I finished my first year and chose not to continue my studies. Instead I worked my way up the rankings at Earls. I worked at Earls for the next 3 years and learnt a lot. My time came to leave the restaurant after I couldn't learn a whole lot more or move up in the rankings. It was time for something new. I spent the summer contemplating what I wanted to do next. I was in a great space of unknown; the space that so many young adults enter after graduating high school or finish their post secondary education. For me it was a place of frustration. Towards the end of the summer I was introduced to a program called Project Chef. I spent the fall volunteering full time with this great program. The program spends time at Vancouver elementary schools teaching children about healthy food: where it comes from, what it tastes like, how to prepare it and how to enjoy sharing it around a table. As I enjoyed my time in this program I was told that I should apply for culinary school. The more I heard about the experiences my coworkers had with this culinary school, the easier it made my decision to apply.

Two months later, I found myself in the classroom at Northwest Culinary Academy. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience at culinary school; it gave me a very solid base education of cooking. After finishing culinary school I was back in limbo: I had no idea what I wanted to do. There were many things I knew I didn't want to do (for example, work in the restaurant industry). I pondered the idea of going back to university, but I didn't like the thought of 5 more years of school and the amount of money required to do that. Eventually I came across the Chef Education program which fit what I wanted to do perfectly. As it stands right now, I am finishing the requirements necessary to enter the program and I hope to complete it within the next 2 or 3 years.

**VWS:** What kind of work/study are you involved in now?

**MC:** My plan is to finish getting my Red Seal certification (Cook Certification) so I can enter a program at UBC called Chef Education. I hope to have my Bachelors in Education with Chef Education specialty and begin teaching in the years to come. I am attending classes at the Vancouver Pastry Training Center to round out my culinary knowledge. Who would say no to learn how to make sourdough breads, croissants, chocolates, etc..?

**VWS:** What advice would you give to graduate students?

**MC:** If you want to go to university, research your options thoroughly and as early as possible. (especially grants, loans, scholarships, etc...) If I had planned going to culinary school in a better fashion I could have had all of my tuition paid for, with a surplus. Always have a backup plan.

If you are in the space of the great unknown, spend as much time as you can doing the things you enjoy. It will open up many different paths, which will lead you to finding your career or the next step in that direction. Ask the people around you for help and advice.

If you are not keen on what universities offer or how they are structured, there are many alternative post secondary education options. (Y.I.P., Evergreen College, Quest, BCIT, apprenticeship, etc...: do your research)

**VWS:** What are your fondest memories of your time at the VWS?

**MC:** The fall hiking trips were phenomenal; spending time in the wilderness teaches you a lot about yourself and it gives you the opportunity to appreciate what a beautiful place we live in. I also enjoyed playing on the soccer team, especially the trips to the Provincial tournaments.

**VWS:** How did Waldorf education affect your life, and your choice of career?

**MC:** It taught me to question anything and everything, the ability to teach myself, to adapt easily to different circumstances, to have confidence in what I believe even if it means I stand alone, and to have an open mind.

*Interview by Michelle Gibson, for Development  
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