

Louisa Ellis

HIT apprentice Louisa Ellis now runs her own private dining company

Louisa Ellis completed her Level 3 professional cookery apprenticeship with HIT in 2015 at New Hall Hotel in Sutton Coldfield and says her learning journey with HIT set her up for success.

She was supported every step of the way by her HIT Trainer Ian Williams and head chef Matt Warburton who together instilled Louisa with the confidence and ambition to take her career forward to brilliant new heights.

In 2017, she entered MasterChef The Professionals and reached the final three in the TV series, knocking out fellow contestants along the way.

Although she didn't win, she got a second chance two years later when she won the coveted crown of MasterChef The Professionals: A Festive Knockout when she wowed judges in the Christmas leftovers' skills test by rustling up an apple and pear tarte tatin with a brandy flavoured creme anglaise in just 30 minutes.

"I was so happy to win!" says Louisa. "The competition brought together finalists from previous MasterChef series so to win was quite an achievement."

Louisa credits her HIT apprenticeship for getting her where she is today – running her own private dining company.

She says: "My apprenticeship gave me a better understanding of management in the kitchen as well as some key practical skills which are required to be a good chef. There's no doubt that HIT Training helped me navigate the kitchen from a more organised perspective and set me up for success.

"I still use the classic skills I learned in my apprenticeship today such as chopping skills, making sauces and soups, fish filleting and butchery. I soaked up two years' experience in one year thanks to on-the-job learning and the help of HIT trainer Ian.

"It was a great way to learn and much less stressful than classroom learning because I had Ian by my side throughout. He was like my personal trainer, pushing me to succeed every step of the way and never overloading me.

"The apprenticeship taught me that if you take extra risks, sometimes it pays off. When I won 'A Festive Knockout', I couldn't believe I got everything on a plate in time, let alone coming away as a winner. It was completely overwhelming but 100 percent worth it."

During the competition, it was Louisa's two-course New Year's Eve feast that blew away Michelin-starred Marcus Wareing and fellow judges Monica Galetti and Gregg Wallace.

An Asian-inspired menu of wagyu beef, spiced shrimp emulsion, tempura enoki mushrooms and schezuan spiced potato, followed by lime yogurt mousse with a mango and yuzu centre, lemon granita, compressed mango and pineapple and ginger crumb were hailed "two brilliant plates of food" and the main course was the dish of the day for Marcus.

Paying Louisa the best compliment ever, Marcus said: "Louisa has got an amazing future in front of her. I really can't wait for her to open a restaurant because I'd love to go."

Now running her own private dining company <https://www.cheflouisaellis.com>, Louisa is the ultimate proof that apprenticeships lead to great things.

She says: “I would say to anyone interested in a career in hospitality do some work experience in a kitchen and if you like it, do an apprenticeship. My apprenticeship launched my career and I wouldn’t be where I am today without it.

“The last restaurant I worked in was Sat Bains in Nottingham and then I chose to run my own business after I was invited to cook a three-course dinner at someone’s home on Twitter. It sparked an idea to set up my own private dining company and I haven’t looked back.

“I wouldn’t rule out doing another apprenticeship further down the line – perhaps in business management – but we’ll see. For now, I’m loving the freedom of being my own boss and creating my own menus.”

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