

# Clark Crawley

Skill: Cooking

**From:** London  
**Competed in:** WorldSkills 2005, Helsinki  
**Result:** Medallion for Excellence

## Qualifications

- NVQ level 2 in Food Preparation and Cooking



Clark Crawley's favourite past time when he was very young was making cakes with his mother. It was this early passion for baking and cooking at home which inspired Clark to become one of the UK's most successful young Sous Chefs at just 25 years old. Leaving mainstream school when he was 14, Clark was motivated to follow his instincts and refused to let his lack of academic qualifications hold him back.

Says Clark, "I didn't enjoy school and don't have an academic bone in my body. I have always taken a 'hands on' approach to life so cooking was an ideal hobby for me to turn into a career. When I was 16 I began a Modern Apprenticeship with the Thistle Hotel at the Barbican in London which was fantastic as I was able to learn through working and actually doing something rather than learning about something as an abstract concept."

## So how did he get involved in competitions?

Clark explains "There is a big culture of competitions in the catering industry so I began entering competitions quite early on in my career. It was while I was working for Sodexo in Canary Wharf I discovered that I loved competing and the buzz it gives you when you win

and I have never looked back since. Competitions are a great motivator and still a big part of my life and I know I will never stop chasing the next accolade."

## And how was he selected for WorldSkills?

"I had won a few national Junior Chef Competitions at the time of the selection for WorldSkills which qualified me to enter the playoff competition held at Derby College for the 2005 WorldSkills team. I won the playoff event and the rest is history!"

## So what was the training and preparation like for WorldSkills?

"The preparation was tough and I think in total I completed over 500 hours of training for the competition. On the other hand, the experiences I had as part of my training were fantastic and have definitely helped me in my career."

## And specifically what kind of things did he get up to?

Clark travelled around the UK to learn from the best people in the industry some of the skills he would need for the

WorldSkills competition. As he explains, "In the build up to the competition I worked in loads of different restaurants including Raymond Blanc's Manoir in Oxford and Claridges in London. I also spent a week doing a chocolate course for Cacao Barry and completed a sugar course with one of the top sugar chefs in the country. Adam Pierson, who competed in the 2003 WorldSkills competition held in Switzerland, gave me a lot of support and advice about what to expect at the competition which was also really useful."

## What was WorldSkills like?

"Great! I absolutely loved the buzz created by such a huge international event and really enjoyed cooking in front of so many people. I have to admit at times I played up to the crowd which perhaps effected my final score as I was concentrating on pleasing the onlookers rather than being totally single-minded in my focus.

I think I was lucky because I had taken part in so many competitions previously that coping under pressure wasn't too much of an issue for me. To me cooking is just what I do; it's not rocket science or anything. I found being on a world stage very exciting but I wasn't put off by nerves."

### How supportive was your employer?

"I was working for Sodexo at the time and they were fantastic. They gave me loads of support and helped me out in any way possible, especially giving me so much time off from my job to undertake the additional training. It wasn't only my direct bosses who were supportive, I received letters of support from senior management at Sodexo which really impressed me and made me feel special. To be honest because of the commitment you need to give WorldSkills in the lead up, never mind during the competition itself, I think it is essential for your employer to be on your side."

### What benefits does Clark feel that he gained from his WorldSkills experience?

For Clark the benefits have been far-reaching.

***"The training I received prior to competing at WorldSkills has definitely been a huge advantage to my career. The mental training we received as a team has also helped me to cope with pressures in other tournaments and competitions I have taken part in since Helsinki. The act of competing on a world stage has given me another perspective on competitions which has helped to give me the confidence to push myself further all the time."***

### And what sticks in your mind most about WorldSkills?

"For me, the sheer size of the stage I was competing on will be my lasting memory. The whole event was massive and not only inside the competition arena. I remember walking round Helsinki and seeing huge posters promoting the event and thinking that I was part of something really huge."

### So has it changed anything for you?

"WorldSkills has taught me how to be better in the future. I was delighted to receive a Medallion for Excellence. At the time when I saw the standard of some of the other competitors I realised how much I still had to learn and felt that I did as well as I could have done in 2005. I have certainly learnt from my experience in Finland and have rectified my mistakes in other competitions I have taken part in since. "

### So have competitions remained a big part of his life?

The answer to this is a firm yes. Since taking part in WorldSkills, Clark has taken part in lots of competitions winning Junior Master Chef of Great Britain and most recently coming runner up in the Knorr Chef of the Year, which at age 25 makes him one of the youngest chefs ever to be placed in the top three of the finals.

### What are your ambitions for the future?

"To be rich and successful through a business in cooking!!! At the moment I am enjoying working as a Sous Chef for Compass, a private bank in Mayfair. As for the future, I would love to run a successful restaurant winning as many awards and accolades as possible!"

### Any Words of advice for your successors at WorldSkills?

***"Work hard, focus, try and raise your game a notch for the finals as standards are very high. Also don't be put off by anything whilst competing or you'll lose valuable time - just do your thing and don't panic!"***

### And finally, with WorldSkills London 2011 just a few years away, what does Clark see as being the benefits to young people?

"Bringing WorldSkills to London is a chance for the UK to show off exactly what our country has to offer young people today! The more publicity there is about WorldSkills London 2011 the better as this will help the maximum number of people find out about what's available to them after they leave school in a really exciting setting."

For more information, please contact the PR Team, UK Skills: 020 7612 9260