

# Graham Squire

## Skill: Cooking

**From:** Gosport  
**Competed in:** WorldSkills 2007, Shizuoka  
**Employer:** Claridge's  
**Result:** 12th out of 23

### Qualifications

- 9 GCSE's
- City & Guilds Specialised Chefs Course – kitchen, patisserie, baking & confectionary, Distinction
- Basic & Intermediate Food Hygiene
- NVQ Level 2 Food & Drink Service
- NVQ Level 2 Catering & Hospitality
- French for Catering, Distinction
- NVQ Level 2 Information Technology
- NVQ Level 2 & 3 Food Preparation, Butchery & Cooking
- First Aid within the kitchen



Graham knew early on that he wanted to get into the hospitality business and after school headed straight to catering college before winning a placement at Claridge's. It was here that he got into competitions, working for a head chef who had already entered a WorldSkills competitor. But Graham was still shocked when he found out that he would be heading to Japan to compete in the Cooking competition.

### So it was Graham's employer that got him into competing?

Well, it always helps to have a supportive boss and in Graham's case, his boss had already had a WorldSkills competitor work for him. It was natural therefore, that Graham might also want to give it a go and Claridge's were behind him all the way. But Graham still had to prove himself. He went through three selection events and competed against two others for the coveted place on Team UK. After the final three day competition, Graham was finally told he had deservedly won a place on the team.

### Was training hard?

The answer is yes but Graham knew that it was what he needed to do in order to prepare himself for WorldSkills.

***"There was a lot of work involved and all my days off were spent in training but this was to help me improve my skills and confidence and I couldn't have gone to Japan without doing all of that."***

### Did being in a big team help?

It's another yes from Graham. "I made such good friends with so many of the team. We all formed really close bonds with every other because we were all sharing the same experience. It was also great to have other hospitality competitors to speak to as they really understood what I was going through."

### So how did Graham cope with arriving in Japan?

Well he had certainly never been anywhere like Japan before and was really shocked about the difference in culture from the UK. But he loved it and is determined that he will go back again one day. "The people were so nice and the place was immaculate, it was so beautiful."

### What was competing like?

As soon as the competition started Graham got to work and put all his effort into doing the best job he could. Being watched by some 200,000 visitors was a bit daunting as well as being amongst the very best the World has to offer, but Graham was determined and finished the competition in 12th place, a great achievement.

**Has anything changed for Graham since he came back?**

The main difference is Graham's feeling of confidence.

*"I now know that I am a talented chef and have the skills to prove it, which is a great feeling. I did lots of media interviews and even appeared on Ready, Steady, Cook with all the famous chefs! It was all nerve racking at first but now I'm happy to do things like that and I know they are important - and my boss is pleased with the results too which is always good!"*

**What advice would Graham give to others wanting to take part?**

Well that's simple. "Go for it, you get so much out of it – more than you'd ever expect, so it's definitely worth it. But be prepared, you have to be dedicated to make sure you are fully prepared when it comes to compete."

**And what are Graham's views about World Skills?**

That's an easy one too.

*"I think the job that UK Skills do and the WorldSkills competition itself is really very important. It helps people realise that vocational careers can be a passion not just a job and that they are skilled jobs that people should aspire to be better at and feel proud to do. People can get a lot out of their chosen career if they are prepared to work at it, and UK Skills gives them a platform to do this."*

**A word with Graham's employer: Martin Nail, Executive Chef, Claridge's**

Training WorldSkills competitors is nothing new for Martin, having been involved with competitions for over six years now. In fact he continues to enjoy being part of it and has already started preparing more staff to get involved!

**Why did Martin decide to get involved?**

With Martin it was a personal interest in WorldSkills. "I really believe that competing at events such as WorldSkills can improve our industry and hence the quality of staff, which obviously has huge benefits to any business."

**So does it benefit a company to be involved?**

Martin says yes.

*"The amount of time you give the competitor does seem endless but it is a great motivation to the whole team. There's obviously disruption but this can be managed. There is a value in the PR that we get for our company by being part of WorldSkills but more importantly for us it relates to quality, training and excellence."*

**What advice would Martin give to other companies thinking of getting involved?**

"Don't think short term, think of the investment in the long term. Getting involved means you are not only adding value to your own business but to your industry in general too."



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