

# Will Torrent

## Skill: Confectioner/Pastry Cook

**From:** Iver, Buckinghamshire  
**Competed in:** WorldSkills 2007, Shizuoka  
**College:** Thames Valley University  
**Employer:** Bachmann's Patisserie, Thames Ditton  
**Result:** Medallion for Excellence

### Qualifications

- 10 GCSE's
- 3 A Levels
- 1st Class Honours Degree



Cooking has run in Will's family for generations and it was no surprise when Will himself was bitten by the bug and decided to make a career out of it. In November 2007, he joined Team UK, headed to Japan to compete at WorldSkills in the confectionery/pastry event and won a Medallion for Excellence for his work.

### So how did it all begin?

Well, Will has always wanted to be become a chef and with a trained chef for a grandfather and a keen cook for a Nan, food and cooking form part of Will's earliest childhood memories. At school Will was happy to find that cooking came naturally for him and he decided to take this further and take up a degree at Thames Valley University. But it was the 'sweet' side that Will really enjoyed.

### How did Will get involved in competitions?

This came from Will's lecturer at Thames Valley. Yolande Stanley, who became Will's training manager, was looking for talented young people to enter the national competitions and when Will expressed an interest in taking part in pastry competitions,

Yolande was only too happy to help him. From then on, Will entered a number of competitions and finally the UK WorldSkills selection event, and after winning this, he was told he'd won a place on Team UK.

### What was training for WorldSkills like?

As soon as Will had earned his place on the team the preparations for WorldSkills began. As Will explains:

***"We tried to make every single run through that I did as realistic to the actual competition as possible. It was a lot of hard work, we were constantly streamlining and improving my skills and at every point we'd look at what I'd done, work out if any areas could be improved on, and do it again until it was perfect. I was training all the time but it was worth it."***

### So what was it like in Japan?

Will had already travelled quite extensively so although Japan was new to him, he quickly got used to the cultural differences and got down to work. It was made even easier by having such good friends in the team. "Team UK became a family. The camaraderie was essential in keeping the whole team going."

### And what was it like to compete?

Will says: "I was really enjoying it. There were over 200,000 people walking by, watching what we were doing and genuinely being interested in what we were doing which was great. On the last day though it started going wrong for me, I was really having trouble with my chocolate and I suddenly could feel all those eyes on me. I left the stand at one point and Bruce our team leader had to help me. After talking to him I went back in and apparently made the best chocolate I had ever done!"

### How did it feel to come home after WorldSkills?

Will was shattered and wanted to take a well deserved rest when he got home but he wasn't allowed that just yet. His mum and dad had organised all his

best friends to be there to greet him on his return and even made him parade round his home town of Iver!

### **Has anything changed for you since your return?**

For Will the overriding difference is his confidence.

***"Since I've been back I've done a month's work at the famous Fat Duck restaurant with chef Heston Blumenthal - one of my role models, starred in a pantomime in Iver, appeared on TV's Ready, Steady, Cook, been interviewed by my local papers and been involved in the new Kruups launch, re-inventing the Black Forest Gateaux. It's been amazing."***

### **How does Will view the work of UK Skills and WorldSkills?**

***"I think it's very important. Competing in national competitions and at WorldSkills is such a unique opportunity and anyone who is thinking of getting involved should definitely do it! You have to be dedicated and work hard, but it is an experience you will never forget and it helps develop your skills and understanding of how the working World works."***

### **So what now for Will?**

Well, Will's certainly not going to lie back and take things easy. He is quick to say he wants to carry on learning, try new skills out and experience as much as possible. He also wants to stay involved with WorldSkills and has applied to become an Assistant Training Manager for 2009.

### **A word with Will's employer: Chris Bachmann, MD, Bachmann's Patisserie**

Bachmann Patisserie has been involved with UK Skills since a former employee, Chris Nurse, competed in WorldSkills in Switzerland nearly 5 years ago, but the company has been involved in judging and winning many national competitions for the past twenty years. So Chris has plenty of experience to share.

### **So why did Chris get involved in the first place?**

Well Chris explains: "Bachmann's has always been committed to staff training, and we provide an environment in which constant learning takes place in parallel with employee daily duties. The concept of WorldSkills fits into the ethos and any candidate who is given the correct support from his or her employer will gain an enormous amount of valuable experience from the process, regardless of their final placing. By focusing and refining a large variety of disciplines within their chosen field, the employee will improve their general skills level, and this is most beneficial to any employer."

***"It is also true that any company that is committed to training will also attract the best staff."***

### **What advice would Chris give to employers thinking of getting involved?**

"The WorldSkills competition demands the highest standards and candidates will not achieve their true potential in the competition unless they are given adequate preparation and support from their employer. Therefore our advice to any company considering getting involved is to give the candidate the time to visit a variety of establishments to learn as much as they can from as many sources. The candidate will also need lots of time to practice, and the competition itself is a lengthy process and we also helped with Will's training for the competition. Although this is a big commitment for an employer to make, as it does inevitably disrupt the employee's work routine, we believe it is a worthwhile investment."

### **Will Chris take part again?**

The answer is yes. "Both Will and our previous candidate thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience from beginning to end and markedly improved their skills in the process. As such, we would definitely continue to support any suitable employee who wished to enter the competition."

### **What does Chris think of WorldSkills being held in London in 2011?**

"Having WorldSkills held in London will inevitably lead to a rising of the profile of the competition in the UK. I think that vocational skills are still relatively undervalued in this country and this may well go some way to redressing the balance. It also presents an excellent opportunity for all employers to get involved. Employees who are not directly involved with the competition can attend and see how their colleagues fare. Even an employer who has no candidate can view how their competitors both in the UK and abroad are doing."

"WorldSkills is a hotbed for innovation across many industries and being in London will create a buzz that will hopefully inspire future candidates and result in a general raising of standards across many professions."

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