

Visit Exmoor Discovering the Aspiring Young Chefs of Tomorrow

Visit Exmoor and partners are helping local young people discover their culinary passion with the second year of the Exmoor Young Chef of the Year competition.

Six finalists aged 12 -16 from a range of local schools are required to cook a three course menu showcasing local artisan producers in two hours. The final will be held in the training kitchen at West Somerset Community college on Saturday 7th October 2023. The young contestants will also be required to produce a table setting and menu.

Each young person has been offered the opportunity to be paired with a local professional chef for mentoring to develop technical skills, creativity and vision.

Last year's winner Perran Clark from Braunton, is now working full time in the industry, and was mentored by chef Carla Jones. Carla said, *"Entering competitions is a way to challenge yourself personally and professionally. It enables you to be critiqued and take that feedback and learn from it. Not only do you get to meet new people within all sectors of the hospitality industry it opens up opportunities. You get to be creative and showcase your skills and ideas."*

Nathan Reardon, the 2022 runner-up said, *"Taking part in the competition was a great experience. I learnt a lot about working in a professional kitchen and it really improved my confidence. I was given the opportunity to cook in a You Tube video with Exmoor Chef Chin from Ziangs at Porlock and I've worked alongside chefs at major events like when I cooked at Knowle Manor with Anita-Clare Field and Werner Hartholt. The competition also helped me get into the Michael Caines Academy at Exeter college starting in September. Without this competition I might not have achieved it."*

Prizes include a day with the England National Culinary Team, a stage at the Barnstaple Food Fair, A day's work experience in a Michelin kitchen and helping at a pop up restaurant amongst many others. "Max Lawrence the competition co-ordinator said *"We are so grateful for the local industry support we have had in donating these amazing experiences to encourage young people to feel inspired and elevated in their career choice"*.

Visit Exmoor are leading on a collaboration of industry experts across Exmoor, West Somerset, and the coast to create the *Centre of Excellence for Hospitality*. One active supporter of the initiative is Somerset-based food writer, restaurant critic, and broadcaster William Sitwell

Chief Executive Officer of Visit Exmoor Emma Thomasson said, *"There are exciting and fulfilling career opportunities working in hospitality on Exmoor. This a brilliant industry to work in with so many entry points and education opportunities. We are passionate about connecting the talent and opportunities here for young people, and those looking for a second career with our brilliant Exmoor kitchens; in hotels, restaurants, pubs and cafes across the area. We have built a network of partners to ensure that training, support, apprenticeships and work experience are well promoted and accessible to all."*

The competition is a collaboration of stakeholders including Visit Exmoor, Exmoor National Park, Minehead Rotary Club, West Somerset Community College, Bridgewater & Taunton College Trust, Petrock College, Brend Hotels and Butlins.

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Any enquiries should be sent to projects@visit-exmoor.co.uk or contact Max Lawrence on 07860 135271.