



THE STAR

Media release

## Aspiring culinary apprentices learn the tricks of the Indian trade

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Apprentice chefs training through The Star Entertainment Group's culinary institute will be immersed in the flavours of India today, as part of an ongoing series of signature masterclasses aimed at building the skills and global repertoire of the company's next generation of chefs.

Since 2012, The Star Culinary Institute has been providing three-year culinary apprenticeships as part of The Star Entertainment Group's partnerships with TAFE Queensland and TAFE NSW.

Across all three properties, The Star Entertainment Group currently employs more than 90 full-time culinary apprentices with about half of these in Queensland, as well as 20 school-based culinary apprentices with half from Queensland.

Along with its consortium partners, the company is growing and will need hundreds more chefs in the future to support its Queen's Wharf Brisbane development and the planned expansion of The Star Gold Coast.

The masterclasses are part of the many unique and exclusive learning opportunities offered by the company, where its leading chefs deliver curated lessons on a range of cooking techniques and cuisines from chocolate-making through to butchery; and American food through to Japanese.

The Star Entertainment Group Culinary Projects Director for Queensland Uday Huja will run the Indian curry and bread-making masterclass while sharing his Indian ancestry and childhood upbringing in the southern states of America.

"I grew up in Charlottesville, Virginia, to Indian-born and raised parents, who also happened to be great cooks – so from an early age I had a real appreciation for both Southern and Indian food," Chef Huja said.

"While it's imperative that apprentices learn the classic cooking techniques like French for example, it's also important for them to get to know their family heritage because it can often provide a platform to uncovering their own signature style of cooking, which can take them all around the world."

Chef Huja will draw upon an old family recipe to teach the apprentices how to make 'puri', which is an Indian fried bread; and 'chole', an Indian vegetarian curry made from chickpeas.

"The masterclass will particularly focus on different spices and spice blends, and how to make masala, which is the base for any Indian curry," Chef Huja said.

The Star Gold Coast first-year culinary apprentices 28-year old Emma Hartley and 17-year old Jaecris Abraham are both excited to be taking part, also crediting their families for entering a culinary career pathway.

“I grew up on the Gold Coast in Mudgeeraba where my dad was a chef and my grandmother a self-taught baker, so food was always a big part of our lives,” Ms Hartley said.

“However, it took some time for me to get started – before becoming an apprentice chef, I was a station hand where I mustered cattle and helped maintain a property out near Springsure in central Queensland.

“Eventually I found it quite isolating, especially as the phone and internet service weren’t very reliable where I lived, so I came back to the coast and decided to return to my first passion of food.

“I’ve been working at The Star Gold Coast now as an apprentice chef for six months and have loved the variety, especially learning about high-end dishes at its signature restaurant, Nineteen at The Star.”

Jaecris Abraham said his Filipino heritage, and his grandmother, were huge inspirations for his decision to undertake a school-based apprenticeship at The Star Gold Coast in February last year.

“I began my training while in Year 12 and have really enjoyed learning from a number of highly experienced chefs, something you wouldn’t necessarily get anywhere else on the coast,” Mr Abraham said.

“Today marks my third masterclass so the apprenticeship continues to offer exclusive learning opportunities like this, while also enabling us to be rotated across the property so we can experience different areas and restaurants.

“I’ve not only grasped how a commercial kitchen runs but also learnt different cooking techniques and cuisines, which is helping refine my skills and build my confidence so that I can realise my dream of becoming a head chef one day.”

The Star Culinary Institute’s Indian cooking masterclass will take place at The Star Gold Coast on Tuesday 26 February 2019.

**For more information:**

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