

# THE ART OF MODERN SUGAR AND CHOCOLATE TECHNIQUES



## **Lisa Dunn**

ISS Institute/TAFE Fellowship

Fellowship funded by ETTE, Victorian Government

**The Art of Modern Sugar and Chocolate Techniques**  
Lisa Dunn

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# ISS Institute/TAFE Fellowship 2002

## **The Art of Modern Sugar and Chocolate Techniques** Lisa Dunn

### **1.0 Acknowledgements**

#### Fellowship Organisation:

The International Specialised Skills Institute Inc (ISS Institute)

#### Fellowship Sponsor:

Office of Employment, Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE)

#### Employer Support: Wodonga Institute of TAFE

Director, Adrian Marron,  
Associate Director Brian Smith  
Department Manager Graham Sievwright.

#### International Organisations and Mentors:

- The International School of Confectionery Art – Mr. Robert Oppeneder – Founder and Instructor
- Arrabella Sheraton hotel Munich – Patissieur Martin
- Matthias Mittermeier – Maitre Patissier, Chocolatier, Glacier – Pastry chef/ Hotel Wernburg, Wernburg.
- Hotel Wernburg, Wernburg – Head chef –

### Influential Organisations:

- Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) for the development of the nationally accredited training packages
- Department of Employment, Training and Tertiary Education (ETTE) in the implementation of state government policy in employment and training of cookery students
- Australian Culinary Federation representing industry professionals  
-Victorian Cookery Educators Network - representing commercial cookery teachers within the state training system.
- Australian Guild of Professional Chefs - represents professional chefs and associate members nationally
- Education and Training Providers - having an impact on the scope of study, specialised techniques and the development of courses for the Hospitality Industry.

## **2.0 Introduction**

### **2.1 International Specialised Skill Institute Inc. (ISS Institute)**

The ISS Institute fills gaps in industries and enterprises where the means of doing so are not available through government programs of Australian TAFE institutes and universities.

#### ISS Institute:

- Explores opportunities in 'design' and skills (traditional and leading-edge) and identifies knowledge gaps towards establishing a range of collaborative projects with industry, professional associations, firms, education and training institutions and government.
- Identifies experts in diverse areas of design, master level trades and professional occupations in established and emerging industry sectors with the intent to effect their services to visit Victoria to conduct a range of education and training activities such as lectures and workshops.

This is achieved through the development of global partnerships with the fellowship program The training and educational activities that stem from this ensures that the skills are continually being infused into the cookery environment and subsequently the Industry.

ISS Institute's operations are directed towards bringing knowledge and leading-edge technology to Australian Industry, business and education/training institutes. The loss of specialised skills and knowledge from the industry can be rebuilt to better enhance the capabilities of industry and business, maximising opportunities in the global and local marketplace. And, now importantly through this fellowship the expansion into rural Australia.

The outcomes for such an intuitive organisation has meant the creation of many new business enterprises, the development of existing businesses in sustaining a competitive edge and the return of lost skills and knowledge to the workforce generating renewed interest and faith within the job market.

Since 1999, the Victorian Government, through OTTE, has financially supported ISS Institute, as its major sponsor.

## **2.2 The Recipient:**

The ISS Institute was awarded to Lisa Dunn to undertake a program of study in the areas of specialised cookery techniques that would benefit rural Victoria. The study incorporated specialised chocolate and sugar techniques through the International School of Confectionery Art in Munich, Germany.

## **2.3 The skills gaps that were identified and researched were:**

- Sugar pulling and blowing techniques
- Modern chocolate techniques
- The art of plated desserts - incorporating the use of new products and technological developments.

## **2.4 The Australian context - Rural Victoria**

The Hospitality Industry in Australia as well reported is a growing industry with many demands and expectations. Rural Victoria is no exception to the rule. The industry is one of change and not always for the betterment of skills and knowledge. The culinary treasures on offer in Rural Victoria is fast becoming an envied package. Rural Victoria has the lifestyle and opportunities for growth in a relaxed, but still competitive environment. Increasing numbers of tourists and investors are being drawn to these areas for this lifestyle, however the expectations of the Restaurants and Hospitality Industry are not compromised. Australia's economic environment is reliant on the Tourism and Hospitality sectors to continually provide stability in the service industry.

The commercial cookery sector plays an integral part in developing the skill and knowledge to successfully maintain a workable level of talent. In regional Australia this concept still rings true, however specialised skills are harder to implement in country Victoria than in the metropolitan cities because of the isolation and geographical locations.

## **2.5 The skills gap:**

Having been involved in the training of apprentices in business and the TAFE system, rural isolation has proved to be a major influence in skills and knowledge development. Teaching and reaching for that next competitive level became an issue for several industry bodies. The demographics of Wodonga to many larger centres required enormous effort both in time and monetary costs. Many of the opportunities and skills have been lost as a result.

The acquisition of these new-found skills and knowledge would ensure the cookery heritage was maintained, but more importantly the expansion of the industry regionally.

Previous growth of the apprentice industry from work based training to TAFE enabled the concentration of skills and knowledge to be absorbed without interruption of the working schedule.

The current system is the product of various changes to the training agenda nationally. The introduction of training packages under the Australian National Training Authority. These changes have led to the introduction of a certificate level based system allowing several pathways to be undertaken. Unfortunately, the changes led to the streamlining of the industry restricted by the training package guidelines. At the same time it leaves the interpretation open to individual perceptions resulting in a varied standard of training based on industry requirements and expectations.

The demand for quality chefs in regional Victoria is high with the supply being low. This trend has been occurring at a faster rate each year. The attraction of higher salary promises ensures a steady rate of employment to the metropolitan areas.

Part of this study was to investigate the skills that are still required in the overseas market and therefore offering these skills to regional Victorian apprentices so that they can compete and, more importantly, survive in national and international hospitality cultures.

The trend in rural Victoria for apprentices is to complete their training locally and move to metropolitan centres, furthering their career prospects. The beliefs being that these areas have more to offer with regard to career prospects and wage earning potential. It is seen as a way of keeping with the style of the cuisine of the day as well as the enticement of the city atmosphere. Of those that continue to remain in the areas of their training then in my opinion some do tend to stagnate, as they desire to, while others will take the challenge and become owners of their own business or head chefs. The training of apprentices from these graduates is a reward envied at Wodonga Institute of TAFE. In the past twelve months the interest supporting specialised skills training has grown from the apprentices themselves and the Industry representatives in business organisations.

Attracting clientele to Wodonga Institute is based upon reputation, with rural isolation being a negative catalyst. With more exposure then the local apprentices could continue to regard their opportunities in rural Victoria as equivalent at all levels of training. The support of local industry and organisations in maintaining our apprentice quota is commended.

Many small business and large organisations in conjunction with TAFE are providing dedicated training for our future chefs. The number of apprentices per organisation was on the decline, however the strain on industry with this shortfall in chef numbers is reversing the decline. The availability of talented chefs with good integrity is low, another factor in being able to offer specialised skills within rural Victoria.

The educational environment of today has not provided a grounding whereby future students can view a trade as a recognised career. Many agendas are set for further higher education with careers in trades being seen as an alternative in life, if not choosing higher education. As educators we need to encourage students to take on careers in trades and acknowledge the importance of forming a future career with many opportunities. The salaries offered need to reflect their commitment to becoming ambassadors of their profession. The realization that cookery can be a profession, not merely a job. Encouragement from families and parents for young people to follow their talents at all levels can only multiply the benefits for our industry.

Discussions with industry apprentices and observations of cookery challenges and competitions, the skills and knowledge gap that became the focal point, was in the areas of chocolate techniques, sugar pulling and blowing and plated desserts and presentation. The focus on these three areas was established so as to provide skills and knowledge that could be adopted by various establishments within Rural Victoria.

### **3.0 The Fellowship Program:**

#### **3.1 Introduction:**

My initial research indicated the direction of the studies. Upon further investigation it was revealed that there were many schools throughout France and Switzerland. The original objective was to participate in as many courses available in a given time frame and budgetary requirements. Language difficulties, course costs and the location and prices of accommodation became obstacles throughout this initial research.

In the beginning research showed that the French Cookery school had the most potential for my required needs. However, after several email conversations it became evident that the school no longer offered the course or accommodation.

The research was broadened to most of Europe resulting in an array of possibilities and the lollie-shop syndrome surfaced. Research into patisserie schools in Munich, Germany resulted in the "Robert Oppeneder School of Decore and Confectionery Art. This proved to be an invaluable assistance in determining my fellowship direction. There were many courses on offer to meet the areas of training however requiring many courses that could be scheduled within a month become crucial. Courses undertaken from this involved research were:

- The art of chocolate showpieces
- Sugar pulling, blowing and casting
- Gourmet dessert creations
- The art of French cakes and design

Continuous correspondence reaffirmed my position in the courses.

The support of past fellowship recipients proved invaluable in being able to form the itinerary. Meeting with Udo at a presentation heightened my enthusiasm. His reaffirmation of Robert Oppeneder's knowledge and skills was invaluable. Udo also provided some names of other schools and contact names that I could follow up, time permitting.

Discussions with Anthony Bailey enabled me to broaden my research scope to include training levels and expectations of chefs in other international regions.

The networking with Fellows became an important part of the mentoring program from planning to conquer.

### The language barrier:

It was an obstacle to overcome however research soon indicated that English would also be spoken at the school. From here the agenda was set and further courses were cocooned around this initial fellowship program. The response from various individuals, patisseries and organisations was encouraging.

The itinerary ensured that the round trip would include a visit to the International Food and Trade Expo. Outcomes sought from this was to meet the criteria of the fellowship application in particular the availability of the specialised equipment required for the newly found skills and knowledge.

### The budget:

Budgetary constraints remained the focal point in regard to this initial itinerary. The support received from the Department Manager, Graham Sievwright, Director, Adrian Marron and Associate Director, Brian Smith from Wodonga Institute of TAFE was invaluable in maximising further professional development from this fellowship. The most important aspect of this maximisation of further education, only became possible through a confirmed offer of accommodation via a long lost relative. From a budgetary point of view this allowed further learning opportunities.

## 3.2 Destinations: Educational and Host Organisations

### 1<sup>st</sup> Destination - Dubai:

The initial awareness of Dubai was the heat, however the cultural environment allowed for expansion of the following outcomes:

- Spices of the country were very evident in the aromas coming from within the city areas. The culture of the people was reflected through their religious ceremonies and its affect on the retail trade. The richness of the city (gold) to the diversity of its people was noticeable.
- The cuisine became a task to be reckoned with. Investigation into the food led me to be part of the kitchen and being shown some typical Indian cooking techniques along with discussions with the waiter about his training background.



## Munich: Germany

Arrival at Munich airport and met with my mentors Ollie and Christianne. The day spent familiarising myself with the transport system and the directions for the Confectionery school commencing the next morning.

### Observations:

A very compact and well-organised transport system as a result of Munich previously hosting the Olympic games. The community was well aware of environmental issues and the need to recycle waste with several effective systems operating.



International School of Confectionery Art:

Met Mr. Oppeneder and fellow students. Mr Oppeneder spoke English although the students were apprehensive about speaking English. With further discussions over the next few days it was revealed that they learn English in schools but are not confident verbally. Mr Oppeneder translated the instructions as the courses progressed.



Week one:

Gourmet Dessert Creations

This course allowed me to develop new techniques in dessert making and plate presentation. It revealed some new product and techniques being adopted by the patisserie sectors. The use of silicon mats (Silpat mats) and rubber cooking tins and moulds developed for use in cookery. These products are available in Australia through specialised catering supply establishments, however they are costly. Upon my return I have been able to find suppliers of these products and I am able to use them more effectively as a training tool compliments of new skills and knowledge obtained through this fellowship. The use of brighter colours used in the production of desserts and sponge bases is a trend moving away from the traditional styles of Germany. Many of these techniques I had viewed in specialised cookery texts and now I was able to convert these photographs into a skill that I would be able to develop for the benefit of others in industry in rural Victoria. The ideas on garnishing and decorations particularly the simplicity of them was enlightening. The use of a few basic ingredients and products prepared could result in varied outcomes.



Arabella Sheraton Hotel, Munich.

Further professional development was achieved through this placement at the Sheraton Hotel in Munich. Mr Oppeneder arranged for me to visit this Hotel for 3 days. I met with the Head chef and was taken to the patisserie section of the Hotel. The Patissier Martin was well known and respected Pastry chef. His father is a Master Patissier in Munich.

Like many international hotels the facilities and types of service were varied. I was fortunate to be involved in the preparation and service of a buffet for 800 guests. A fine dining restaurant and café style restaurant formed part of the catering outlets.

Observations:

The variety of desserts offered were limited to German influences with creams and mousses dominating. I reflected on the styles used in Australia and realised that the French domination of our cuisine is a large part of our teaching skills and knowledge. It was refreshing to make the mousse and to investigate many different ways of incorporating them into our own traditional styles. The styles of mousse and creams could be incorporated into tortes both large and individual portions, rather than fresh cream based fillings.

The fine dining restaurant offered many styles of tortes and mousse. These were also replicated in the café restaurant. Displays of sugar work were evident in both the café and on the buffet, a skill I was yet to master. I was able to put into practice knowledge and skills recently gained from the course in the hotel and make the specialised Jaconde sponges for decoration of tortes. The trend like most in the industry today was to use products that are bought into the hotel rather than make them from within. Labour costs and time constraints are always an issue. The Hotel was in the process of making more and more products from the raw ingredients and not purchasing so many commercial items. The Australian industries are still at crossroads and not ready for the transition. The introduction of so many commercial products in Australia is a major factor in why we are losing our skills and knowledge at the grass roots of the kitchen environment. Injection of funds into the industry is urgently needed to allow for training to be carried outside of the working environment. This would ensure that future chefs could retain knowledge of the past in producing quality items from base ingredients and the self-satisfaction of their creations.

Week two:

Chocolate showpieces course

The familiarity of couverture chocolate (pure chocolate) was an area where I could develop many new techniques and knowledge. The course covered:

- Tasting and evaluating the various chocolate available
- The use of cocoa butter
- Chocolate tempering and preparation
- Chocolate painting
- Chocolate modeling pastes
- Colouring chocolate
- Creating chocolate showpieces
- Chocolate finishing techniques





## Observations:

The use of courveture proved to be more versatile in that it had many applications in the dessert kitchen. Confidence gained from hands on approach ensured that many of the skills were practiced and mistakes quickly rectified. Skills obtained:

The ability to correctly heat and cool chocolate enabling a smooth product with correct setting qualities.

To ensure the chocolate retained gloss, a true indication of correct handling techniques.

The combining of food colours with chocolate providing visual enhancement to showpieces and decorative work.

Spraying of chocolate pieces to provide an assortment of textured surfaces for interest and special effects.

Further research and investigation from Victoria would be needed to obtain some of these products for teaching. The use of colours would be one I feel that would be adopted well by local innovative chefs in rural Victoria. It would give them the opportunity to develop ideas and a variety of techniques within their own style of presentation.



Week three:

Sugar pulling and blowing techniques.

A course to be reckoned with. Enthusiasm soon outweighed the feeling of frustration we (students) were experiencing. The reality of being a student again and not the teacher. The technique of understanding the sugar composition and the correct temperature to perform the tasks became an individual learning curve. The course covered the art of:

Preparing the sugar mixture – correctly heating the sugar ensure its capacity to be pulled or blown into shapes.

Colouring the sugar – the use of water based colours to provide a variety of colours to the finished showpiece

Pulling sugar – using the sugar “dough” to produce flowers, fruit, baskets and figurines

Painting of finished products using an air spray gun – using an air gun and colours dissolved in alcohol so as not to destroy the final product. The ability to spray at the correct angle and with the correct amount of pressure and colour.

Basking weaving sugar/ multi coloured ribbons – using a basket mould weaving base to produce a hollow basket for fruit. Incorporating colours together to produce a striped ribbon used in a bow.

Sugar showpieces –the combination of techniques to produce several showpieces

Poured sugar work – the difference between the sugar mixture used for pouring and for pulled sugar work.

The use of isomalt sugar. Isomalt sugar is used instead of granulated sugar in that it is better suited to showpieces because of its ability not to absorb as much moisture as granulated sugar into the final product.



## Observations:

The course in sugar work was one that I based my fellowship on. I had seen sugar work in books and at trade shows, but never had the opportunity to develop skills in this area. It was an area often questioned by students wanting to know the techniques. The more we used the product the better I could see its application in my teaching. Obtaining the specialised equipment within Australia would be a challenge. Upon return to Australia the contacts I had made in Germany and at the Singapore trade show provided the answers. It enabled the Hospitality Department at Wodonga Institute of TAFE to purchase six complete sugar kits, a first for Rural Victoria.



Week four:

### The Art of French Cakes and Design:

This course enhanced the skills and techniques learnt in the plated dessert course in that it looked at many revolutionary styles of cakes. The use of colour, stenciling and various shaped tortes unlike those generally produced by the German Industry. This style of cake designs was causing concern amongst the traditional pastry chefs. The irony being that they were sending their young chefs to learn the techniques. Change is always difficult in any area of life. The techniques covered throughout this course were:

- Coloured sponges other than using cocoa
- Screen printing on sponges
- Jelly glazes
- A variety of creams for cakes
- Different shapes for cakes and tortes
- 15 different styles of cakes and tortes were produced.

### Observations:

The introduction of new techniques and skills in any area of hospitality is a challenge. It is a challenge that we are faced with in our own industry in Australia. Traditional versus innovative. The compromise was to use the basics of our traditional products and methods but incorporate slowly the new techniques. This occurs in all areas of the industry whereby the new, once embraced, becomes the norm. As previously stated our cookery heritage is French based. With Australia being a multi cultural society then many of these techniques can be transposed into various cuisine styles successfully. The opportunity to develop this in rural Victoria through education and communication with industry will mean a broadening of skill, knowledge and with this credibility





Week five and six:

Exploration:

The length of time available outside of these courses enabled me to further investigate the style of cuisine on offer and the cultural aspects of Germany.

I was able to visit a supply warehouse with Mr Oppeneder giving me the opportunity to purchase some specialised tools to enhance my learning and teaching. These items are available through Vital ingredient, Melbourne, Chefs Warehouse, Melbourne and Oppenheimer, Sydney.

Investigating the city of Munich and its food culture proved rewarding in being able to better understand their food supply, costs and high importance of fresh produce. The markets were very similar to those within Melbourne and Sydney. The importance of freshness and optimum product like in Australia is reflective of the final product. The outlay and displays of food is more detailed and decorative than that adopted in our own markets.

The food market held in the Centre of Munich produced many displays of fresh produce and shop windows their marketing source. The types of displays are evident from the photos.





The final days of my courses with Mr Oppeneder led to one of my most adventurous tasks. Mr Oppeneder had received a call from the head chef at the Hotel Wernburg, Wernburg. They had two pastry chefs on staff and one had become ill and they required help over the Easter period. I jumped at the chance to further my knowledge and look again into the industry. I was on a train the next morning at work by 12.00 noon.

Hotel Wernburg:

Hotel Wernburg is set in a castle dating back 800 years. The hotel facilities included: accommodation, fine dining restaurant, a function room, café and a small pub style bar area.



The kitchen staff consisted of 12 chefs at various levels of training and two pastry chefs. The fine dining restaurant seated 30 covers. The food both in style and presentation was outstanding. The Pastry chef was a Master in sugar work and was competing for the culinary Olympic team for Germany. Each dessert plate that was presented to the guest involved a pulled sugar decoration. A menu consisting of 12 courses was on offer as well as individually priced menu. The ten days spent there bought back many traditional dishes of our the cooking heritage but also introduced so many new and innovative ways of preparing and serving menu items. The food production was exact with each dish having specific arrangement on the plate and set garnishes to enhance the menu item. The use of silver and specialty moulds for placement of food and types of serving dishes chosen added to the opulence. Petit menu items such as potato baskets formed by molding around a cork and deep fried showed the intensity of the menu planning. The presentation of these items was time consuming which was reflected in the pricing of the menu and the staff ratio.

The restaurant had received three Michelin stars and was striving for the fourth. The kitchen brigade reflected the traditional hierarchy. Each area responsible for different menu items. The staff were at varying levels of their training from 1<sup>st</sup> year apprentices to second chef and head chef. The head chef ensured that all meals were correctly prepared and garnished prior to being served. His role was one of instructor and mentor. As with valued staff in Australian restaurants many of these staff had followed the head chef to new horizons. The team network ensures efficiency and consistency.

Very little English was spoken in the kitchen other than the head chef and the pastry chef. Upon reflection it highlighted how important visual teaching is. I was not only learning from the pastry chef but also through observing the work of the other chefs in the kitchen. I soon became familiar with garnishes and was able to assist the other chefs with the main meals and entrees and required. I felt that if I were to converse with them then the concentration on the workings of the kitchen would have been lost.

The repertoire of ideas and recipes gathered has been well received upon my return. The skills and knowledge obtained from this work experience proved to be invaluable in reawakening the culinary appetite.



## Recommendations:

The training system as experienced by the staff of the hotel incorporated structured levels of training and continued with a Masters level. This I feel is the crux of today's training environment in Australia. We need to introduce a level beyond that of the apprenticeship to incorporate a Masters level. Apprentices of today do not in my opinion receive enough training both educationally and within their place of employment to best prepare for future management opportunities. Offering a Master level should encompass training practically in areas such as I have had the opportunity to experience overseas and in business areas. The issues of time management staff management and financial management is crucial areas that are not well represented. I strongly believe that if these issues were addressed we would have an industry growing with enthusiasm from the employee and employer levels and one that will sustain developmental change. We need to develop business minded, yet progressive and innovative chefs.

I would encourage the training system to revert back to a four-year apprenticeship in all states. Similar to that of a driving qualification I would like to see compulsory for apprentices to have gained a certificate of a specialised area of cookery obtained prior to the trade certificate being issued. The specialised skills and knowledge would live on, and not be buried along with masters of our trade.

## Week Seven:

### Singapore Catering and Food Exhibition:

A flight incorporating a stop over in Singapore allowed me the opportunity to visit the Singapore Catering and Food Exhibition. Many of the exhibitions provided me with information regarding new product availability, contacts and suppliers of the specialised items I had used or seen in Germany. The cookery demonstrations gave an insight into what style of cuisine is being featured in the global market. The style showcased highly decorated and neatly portioned food items taking advantage of the product, tastes and combination of ingredients. The use of regional produce and traditional menus with the influence of Asian spices and herbs was evident throughout.

### **3.1 Outcomes of the Fellowship program:**

#### Related to the skills gaps:

The experience of having been overseas again at this time in my career and life has meant a great deal to my future and that of others that I am in contact with. This opportunity away has been for a specific reason and a time where I can most use the skill and knowledge I have gained for the benefit of the Hospitality Industry in rural Victoria. The learning has purpose.

Many ideas, techniques and knowledge were gained, as well as some life learning. The reality of being in another country with little knowledge of the language, the networking processes and the ability to take in all aspects of learning will part of my life long learning.

Networking with people from the industry proved to be beneficial for me and for students within rural Victoria. I received a letter of thanks from the Hotel Wernburg. An offer was made for me to return at any stage. It was also suggested that if I had any students that would like to work with him at the castle or any other establishment then he would be only too happy to assist. The contact with Mr Oppeneder was beneficial for me while in Germany but also for my students both with courses and specialised equipment. I had gained the respect from people whom I valued. I found that my passion for the industry, dedication to learning and observation skills gained the respect of these chefs despite language barriers.

The original itinerary set in hindsight was adventurous. I found that once I was on the path of discovery that I could not achieve all my goals. As fate would have it the path led to better learning experiences than predicted.

I became aware that there are skills gaps in all areas of hospitality and in all the areas I visited. Producing many items from the beginning to end was declining, explanation being, in many places, time and monetary constraints incurred when passing on knowledge and specialised skills. Many of these were facing the same challenges of training versus the dollar costs. It was also refreshing to know that in Australia, and in particular rural Victoria, we are heading in the right direction. Attempting to close the skills gaps as outlined in this report will ensure that the industry in rural Victoria can compete with its city counterparts.

Since my return to teaching the interest shown by the students is overwhelming. I have had contact with several employers whom have indicated that they would like specialised courses run for their chefs. They are prepared to make the arrangements for this to occur during the chef's working week. Further discussions have revealed that the time constraints and costs of sending them to Wodonga TAFE is within their budgetary requirements. The interest of students currently studying their apprenticeship program with us has grown. The skills being offered to our students as part of their third year program has spread to the workplace and consequently our intake has increased by 10%.

I was able to display the newly acquired skills with the students currently undertaking courses in the areas of desserts, chocolate work and sugar work.

With the aid of a Government grant we have been able to purchase sugar kits for the students, a first for regional Victoria and a specialised machine for whipping cream which was observed and used in Germany.

The students have been able to produce many decorated sponges, tortes and decorations that they were not aware of previously. Satisfaction comes from the knowledge that the students (including apprentices, commercial cookery, certificate IV Food and Beverage and Diploma of Management) have all been able to acquire new skills and knowledge.

The buffet displays have displayed showpieces from the areas highlighted in the skills gaps and the students reflecting great pride and self-achievement.

My personal profile and that of the TAFE have been raised with invitations for me to demonstrate sugar techniques at a salon culinaire in Wodonga and to demonstrate in Metropolitan TAFE. This is a great accolade for our institute.

We have been able to scrap book our talents through our own restaurant. In particular for a dinner for The Hon. Lynne Kosky MP. Minister of Education and Training held at the Valleys' Restaurant Wodonga Institute of TAFE.

Wodonga TAFE hosted the annual Tourism and Hospitality Conference during September 2002 and again our skills were displayed to our fellow colleagues. Already the transportation of these skills and knowledge is reaching a far wider audience than that of rural Victoria.

The skills and knowledge gained from this experience as stated were professional and life long learning. They included:

- The development of sugar techniques
- The knowledge of new products as in isomalt sugar and its benefit
- The skills in working with courviture chocolate and products that can be produced
- The formation of a network with chefs and professional pastry chefs in Germany
- The importance of keeping up with traditional methods
- Introducing change into an environment
- The commitment to ensuring that specialised skills can become a part of the kitchen environment in rural Victoria
- The importance of achieving workable partnerships with individual hospitality establishments for the advancement of our cultural heritage
- The importance of having an adequate training system to successfully produce masters of our profession in Australia
- The reintroduction of enthusiasm into the world of our apprentices and a sense of pride in their chosen profession.

## **4.0 Recommendations:**

### **4.1 The Challenge**

The existence of skills gaps within rural Victoria, as outlined in the report has led to the growth of many negative issues.

The isolation of industries in rural Victoria has had an impact on skill and knowledge development for apprentices and chefs within the cookery industry. There are many food outlets ranging from cafes to restaurants that are competing in today's market. The styles of food offered reflect the tastes of the consumer as well as the culinary influences of other countries. The cost in terms of labour is a major influence on the growth of skilled professional chefs in the industry today. Many items are being bought in commercially made or out-sourced to specialised establishments.

We have lost our individuality.

Conditions within the hospitality industry do not always allow for enthusiasm to develop or appreciation of a job well done. A fast food and café society has meant that perceptions of the customer have become fast and value for money.

The focus of our challenges:

- To encourage industry to invest in the future of our chefs
- The need to offer advanced skills for the chefs of tomorrow
- The ability to infuse pride and dedication into the industry at all levels
- To encourage our industry to compare skills but more importantly share skills and knowledge
- To bring rural Victoria into the playing field by allowing easy access and availability of specialised training.
- To encourage teaching profession to continually enhance our own skills and development
- To share skills and knowledge with fellow colleagues

## 4.2 Solutions:

### Suggested solutions to overcome the challenges:

- Government incentives to businesses in the hospitality industry to encourage their chefs to develop specialised skills and knowledge outside of the set apprentice program.
- Professional development funds made available for teachers to continue to enhance their level of skills and knowledge.
- The formation of local groups and networks to include rural Victoria.
- The movement of specialised teachers to include rural areas.
- The formation of international networks for the development of skills and the availability of specialised equipment and products.
- Encouragement of apprentices and chefs to be part of an exchange programs both nationally and internationally.
- The support from industry to sponsor individuals who are dedicated to their profession to study overseas.
- Develop a higher profile of the chef of today through the education of the consumer
- To investigate the training system of today and ensure that it enhances the longevity of skill and knowledge development.
- Plan and deliver a variety of workshops to promote advanced techniques and skills that can be adapted into all areas of the hospitality sector

### 4.3 Action Plan:

The industry of today is fast becoming a job to many and few see it as a career path. Teaching observations indicates that this is also reflected through the workplace and in the employment of short term training. The industry is transient in regard to its employees. The dedication and commitment of the chef for the entire apprenticeship has declined. This movement has contributed to the instability of the industry. The casual employment of chefs in the industry does not offer security or opportunity for personal development. The opportunity for progression of chefs into highly skilled professionals is limited to few. The attitude of the industry and that of the consumer need to be changed through educational workshops and information sharing.

#### Mentor the future:

The ISS Institute's Fellows Mentoring Program (past fellows link to new ones) encourages and supports the development of skills and knowledge across a broad network. Many of the candidates regardless of their fellowship origin are able to offer support and valued information to other Recipients.

Continuing the meetings of recipients outside of the major awards events would ensure a more social form of getting together and on an informal basis. My thoughts are on a two-day workshop whereby many recipients can pass on their skill and knowledge directly or converse on the many observations made while overseas. The rotation of these around Victoria would ensure that those outside of the metropolitan areas could contribute regularly. I would also like to see that those with similar interests and skills come together and share ideas and aspirations towards change.

Mentoring in the workplace with the aid of government incentives to ensure that the true needs of the industry and its workforce are met. The needs must be of a high standard so as to maintain credibility.

Promoting chefs who have left the industry and taken with them a wealth of skills and knowledge to become part of this mentoring program.

The achievement of such an action plan is something that will take a great deal of time and effort. We have an industry that is not willing to share and therefore changing attitudes to encourage healthy growth in the industry is a priority.

The education of our students in their training and giving them the skills to communicate ideas and techniques to fellow colleagues would plant the seed of growth for future managers and leaders in our profession.

ISS' in the action plan:

The abundance of knowledge gained from other ISS Fellows in the hospitality area could encourage the development of new models for change. Having conversed with these colleagues, issues are similar in content.

The development of a more structured system, as stated previously, throughout Australia and Victoria is the catalyst for such changes.

With ISS at the centre for communication, we should be able to help build a network of professionals from Rural Victoria and Metropolitan Melbourne TAFE institutes. The development of workshops for teachers to help each other learn new skills and knowledge hopefully would break down the communication barriers and ensure that we are all working towards the long term goal in maintaining our specialised skills.

Once established we would then showcase some of the skills that students had also developed. The locations of these showcases would need to be incorporated into Rural and Metropolitan regions. The hospitality community becoming a beneficiary.

The vast knowledge already gained from Udo; Anthony and my own fellowship must not be allowed to lie dormant. I would like to see that a future fellowship offer of bringing all of these ideas and knowledge together in developing the Master levels and to ensure that training continues to become our focal point. The development of an exchange program being on offer for all apprentices at the completion of their training can only added to our skills and knowledge for future generations. Observations of our industry indicate that a growing number of our apprentices are starting at a later stage in life, therefore I would encourage the industry, as ISS has, to make opportunities open to all ages. Too many of our culinary competitions have an age stipulation and I feel that this is one of the reasons we are floundering in our growth and attraction of people to the industry. The rewards are a necessity in our demanding careers.

