

Mcelyo Menezes

Class of 2019

Demi Chef de Partie



Mcelyo's Story

It's after midnight in London when we catch up with Mcelyo - not an unusual time in his profession. Mcelyo is Demi Chef de Partie at Gordon Ramsay's Restaurant Pétrus. Named after French wine estate Château Pétrus, this Michelin-starred restaurant offers French fine dining and a wine list 70 pages long,

"You go to school and study, and everyone tells you this will prepare you for a career, a profession. But you don't get exposed to professional experience; you're not sure yet what you study for and what you'll be good at. You learn maths and wonder how and where you will apply it in real life."

Mcelyo hadn't decided what pathway to take after high school. He was thinking of becoming a vet. He did a careers day at an accounting firm and ruled accounting out after that. It wasn't until he had to choose optional subjects and enrolled in food & hospitality at St John's - because his best friends were taking it too - that he realised he found his calling.

He remembers the first class: an introduction to knives and food safety. They'd learn to prep, cook, and plate food throughout the year. He teamed up with mate Alex and soon enough realised they were far more successful with Alex measuring and him cooking - nothing got burned. To this day, Mcelyo doesn't do the measuring.

The opportunities were all there for the taking. Mrs Myburg was always ready to help and show the various techniques, but she also shared the joy of cooking and promoted creativity when it came to presentation and plating up. Looking back at these classes now, he realises just how good the setup was. And the burger with mint and garlic aioli prepared by a guest chef from Wintec is still one of his favourite memories.



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After leaving St John's, Mcelyo completed his Diploma in Hotel Management in Oman and landed an internship at the W Muscat Hotel with Marriott. 6 months in, he got transferred to the London Marriott at Leicester Square. He earned his promotion to Demi Chef de Partie after finishing his internship there.

Not long after, a staff member from the Gordon Ramsey Group dined at the Marriott and later came to talk to him in the kitchen. The very next day, he got a call from the Group's office, asking him to come in for a trial at Pétrus.

It came with a long list of dos and don'ts and strict dress requirements. On the day, he was greeted with questions. Was he ready to commit? Was he prepared to put in long hours and the effort to give his best daily and continuously learn? He was told that this trial would be a waste of time if he weren't.

To put that into perspective, his boss leaves home before 8 am and doesn't return until midnight every working day.

He did his trial and did a bit of research on the restaurant and the team behind it. He realised that every great chef in London had worked at Pétrus. Founded by Gordon Ramsay and Marcus Wareing, this restaurant was instrumental in developing London's top culinary talent.



He accepted and hasn't looked back since; it doesn't even feel like a job, he reckons. Currently, he is taking care of the fish section and helps out at other sections if needed.

Pétrus is allowing him to work to his full potential. Everything is incredibly organised and precise. Consistency is key. There are no foreign smells; he works with tweezers to plate up. Every dish is an art form.

We had to ask. Was working in a Gordon Ramsay restaurant anything like Hell's Kitchen? Yes, he said, at the beginning, it is tough, and there's a fair amount of shouting. But, it allows you to find the breaking point. However, now, he is well integrated into the team and considers the head chef a good friend.

And if you happen to pop into Mrs Myburg's classroom, you'll likely find a large poster showcasing McElyo's culinary journey.