



MODULE 4

Talent Opportunity - The potential of student work-placements

Module Contents

Module 4 studies the needs of the culinary business employer and how student work-placements can fit into these requirements.

Earlier in this course, we explored how useful students can be in innovating our culinary heritage. We now explore the talent opportunity or potential of student work-placements from the employers' point of view.

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Needs of the culinary business employer

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Focus on Assignments

01

Needs of the culinary business employer





“
*Food is everything we are.
It's an extension of nationalist
feeling, ethnic feeling, your
personal history, your province,
your region, your tribe, your
grandma. It's inseparable from
those from the get-go*”

Anthony Bourdain

The employer lens

Employer time is so precious, The busiest of kitchens of food businesses/production units have little time to spare. Employers need to reap the benefits of using Student work placements.

Our learning content will help put in place a process to achieve these benefits while using the experience to innovate Cultural Culinary recipes and techniques within their businesses.

Here we will discuss the what, the why and the how from the employer view-point

1

Innovation needs – the opportunities in Culinary Heritage

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Creating a business plan around our Culinary Heritage

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Evaluation and analysis of the entire process



1. Innovation needs

An overview from an employer perspective

Cook it Forward aims to help food businesses, be they hotels, cafes, restaurants, street-food stalls, farms or suppliers; to identify and exploit opportunities in cultural and culinary heritage within their food businesses.

INNOVATION NEEDS

In the culinary sector, there are constant pressures to adapt and change with trends, while being more productive, efficient, and innovative. Regular innovation is something restaurateurs and culinary SMEs aspire to. What restaurant critics seek out. By incorporating student placements into the business model, it can help alleviate some of this pressure.

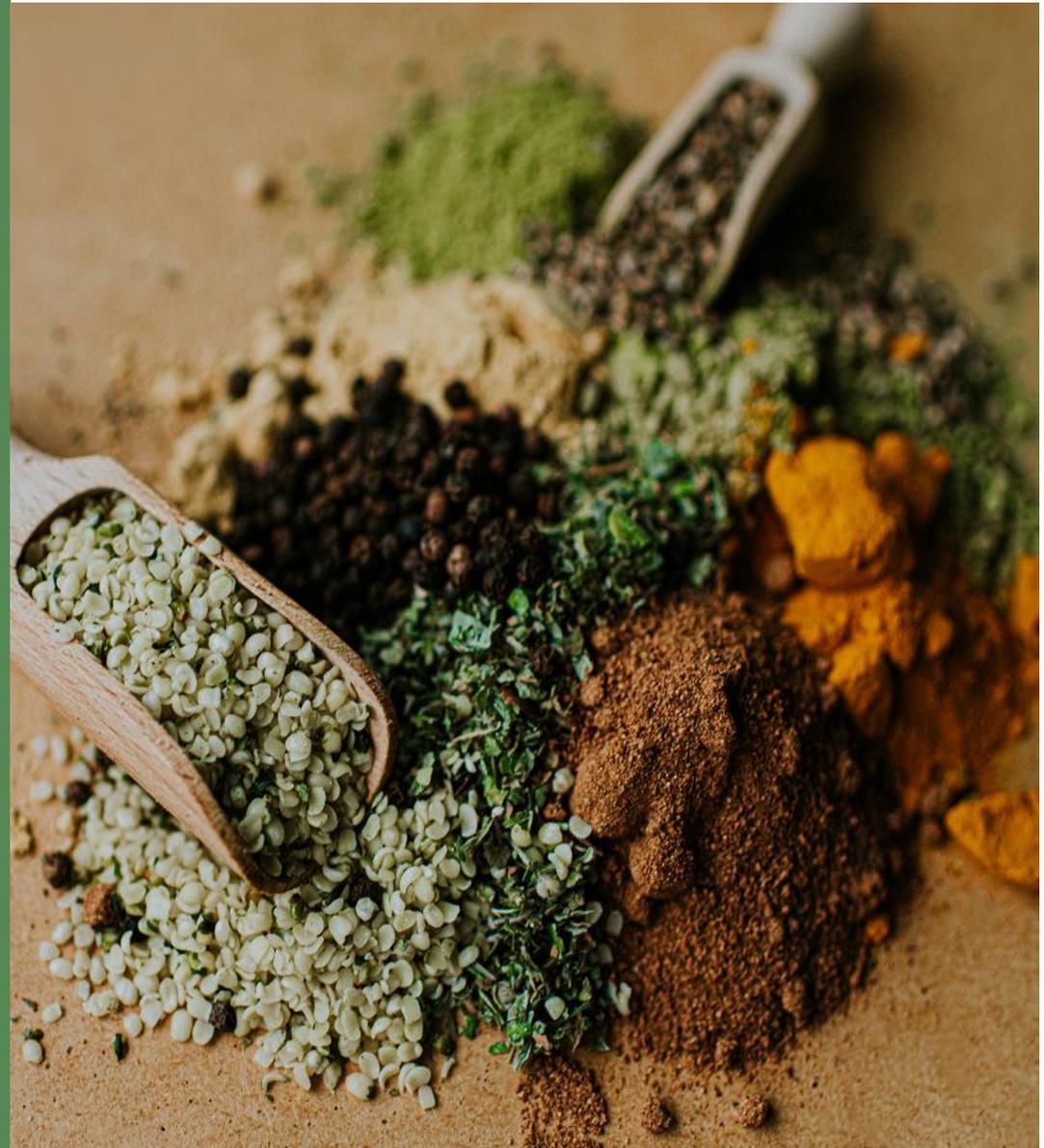


INNOVATION NEEDS

Innovation is fundamental for a culinary business to stay relevant, attract new customers, and have a point-of-difference from competitors.

Nearly 60% of restaurants fail within the first 3 years of opening. So culinary employers know that an innovative idea can be the difference between failure and success.

But, true innovation needs to be authentic. Often, in the hunt for innovation, culinary businesses fall short and mistake gimmicks as innovation. There is nothing more authentic than our culinary heritage – it can be the source of true innovation.



TALENT NEEDS

The hospitality industry is facing a talent crisis putting at risk the growth of one of hospitality, the world's biggest industries that represents over 300 million employees or 10% of Global GDP. With Covid-19 enforced closures, much talent has left the industry. An employer tells us – *“It was a challenge before the pandemic but right now it's an outright crisis ”*

By getting involved in student placements, the employer brings fresh talent into the culinary business, yes it is short-term, but it plants seeds to make sure younger people see the potential of the culinary sector as a career.



DIVERSITY NEEDS

Creating a more diverse and inclusive workplace brings many benefits for business, but fundamentally, it makes for a better place for people, both employees and customers. The culinary sector is a diverse industry already, but diversity is not just race or gender, it can be age and background as well.

The culinary industry is unique in that it naturally operates in a space of multiculturalism with a diverse clientele. Being inclusive means celebrating and encouraging people's differences; according to Forbes, inclusion means being cooperative, collaborative, open, fair, curious, and ultimately accountable.



MARKETING DIFFERENTIATION NEED

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought change. Customers, tastes, dining experiences, competition, and the players in the industry are all changing.

Culinary businesses everywhere were forced to examine their marketing strategies, to dig deep into their creative depths, and in many cases, move beyond their typical comfort zones. Work experience students can bring a new set of skills (e.g. digital and experiential marketing) to help you build your unique brand and message. Did you know that TikTok food trends are one of the fastest growing marketing opportunities?

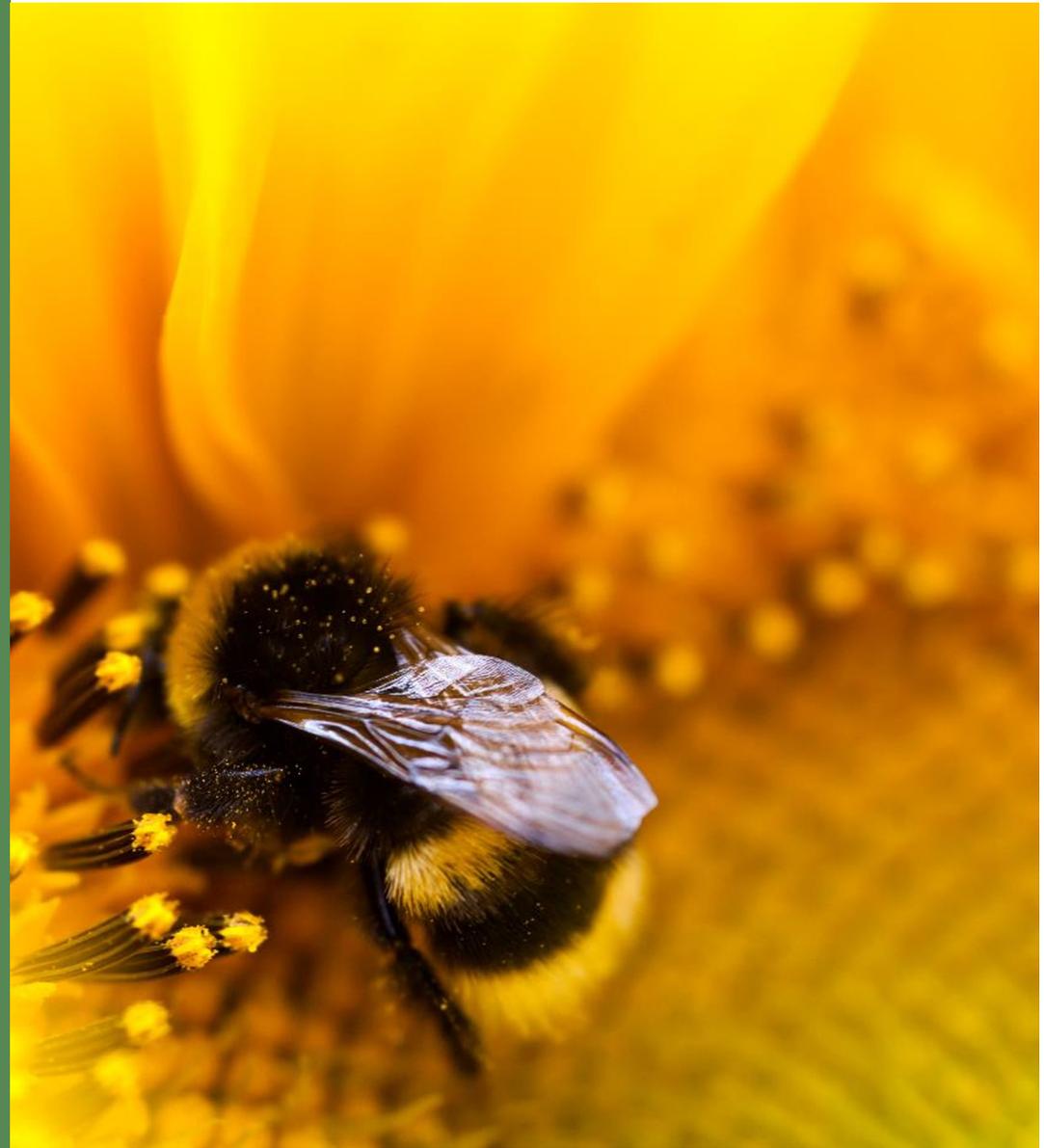


NEED FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainable practices and reducing food waste and food shortages are all driving forces behind the emerging food trends for 2022 and beyond.

Going back to basics in every sense of the phrase is the way forward in the kitchen. Consumers want to protect the planet and will seek out eateries with short supply chains and seasonal offerings. Restoring the use of old recipes and techniques can support this trend.

The pandemic has rearranged consumers' needs in general. People have changed how they socialise and there is a revised focus on personal health as well as a growing concern with the health of the planet.



Need - Rebooting for the Future

Covid-19 has changed our consumption and eating habits for good. The desire for healthy, sustainable products has gone from do-gooder wishful thinking to a must. New longings and visions are demanding to be fulfilled. In the recently published [Food Report, 2022](#), nutritionist and food trend researcher Hanni Rützler illustrates where we are headed on this journey. In her report, we start from a completely new place...“The new normal” where values such as health, hygiene, and safety, as well as topics like ethics and fairness, have shifted into focus. “We should take a fresh look at the emergency solutions we came up with during the crisis because they just might be viable concepts for the future,” the report says. Rützler calls this “forced changes, desired results.” This has changed consumer and eating behaviour as much as the new understanding of healthy eating...“good food, good mood.” In other words, a healthy diet must always be healthy for the environment too. According to Rützler, three central trends have emerged as a result of this new normal:

- ① Zero waste
- ② Local exotics
- ③ The real omnivore

Be inspired...Read this article.

KTCHN *rebel*

CLICK
ON
IMAGE

**Sustainable gastronomy is a
new challenge that makes you
want to embrace change**

Source: <https://www.ktchnrebel.com/sustainable-regionality-gastronomy/>

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FORWARD**



2. Creating a business plan around Culinary Heritage

The Past as the Basis for the Future

Did you know our culinary heritage can be used in business development and value creation?

Culinary heritage has a compelling potential in culinary product and service development. It can be a resource in terms of identity creation, brand building, and marketing.



Creating a business plan

While you may have prepared a business plan when you started your business, few businesses refresh that plan when they diversify.

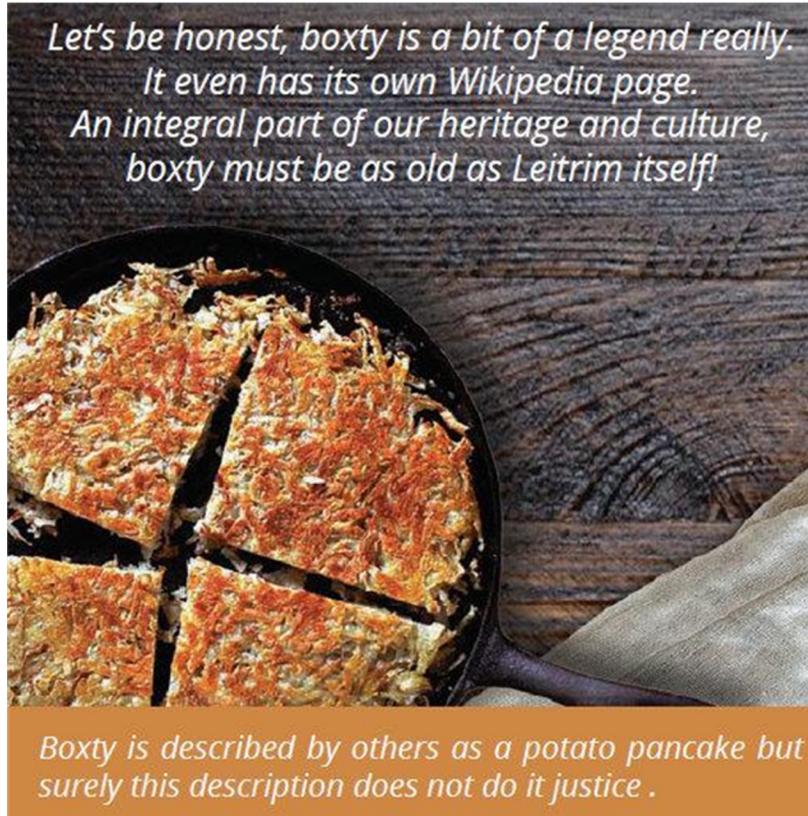
So perhaps, you reimagined a traditional recipe in your restaurant, it is hugely popular, and you feel it has the potential to be seen as a food product. Your business plan could be focused on bringing that product to the consumer in a new way e.g., through creating a food brand.



Branding Example:



EXAMPLE: BUILDING A BUSINESS ON A CULINARY TRADITION



New and innovative approaches to **heritage foods** like Dromod Boxty (Ireland) are trending and emerging across Europe

<https://tasteleitrim.com/leitrim-home-of-boxy/>

NEW ROUTES TO MARKET

Food or Farmers Markets are a great opportunity and low-cost route to market for local culinary producers to extend their business model. They have become a new route of market for many food producers and entrepreneurs who have had to close their regular businesses (cafes/ restaurants) due to Covid 19 restrictions.

Not only do you get the chance to sell, you get to tell your culinary story and gain new customers, but you also get to understand what captures consumers' interest – what consumers regard as authentic and unique and what would encourage them to purchase on a regular basis.



A FARMER MARKET offers a new route to market for **An Caife Bia – Slainte**, (Ireland) who used to have a thriving café but now due to COVID restrictions, they sell at their local farmers markets
www.facebook.com/ancafebiaslainte





In Portugal too, we see many chefs and restaurants such as **Tombalobos Restaurante** creating new projects and selling at Farmers Markets
www.facebook.com/Tombalobos.Restaurante.Alentejano

NEW ROUTES TO MARKET

COVID 19 has led to the rebirth of the subscription boxes, people are loving them and sales for them are booming!

Why do people love them? Once a consumer gets a taste of the convenience and joy of receiving monthly packages, they get hooked. But why? A 2018 study by McKinsey & Company broke down the subscription box companies into three categories: replenishment, curation, and access.

Simply put – subscription boxes offer something new and exciting in a convenient way each month!



Example of Direct to market...



Ireland's Artisan Pantry offers subscription boxes and ships some of Ireland's best artisan food around the world
www.irelandsartisanpantry.com

NEW ROUTES TO MARKET

ONLINE SALES/HOME DELIVERY

Many culinary entrepreneurs have embraced e-commerce, and are leading the way, creating a new business model around online sales and home delivery.

Meal Boxes/ Meal Kits are one of the most popular retail products restaurants are now offering as an alternative to delivery. The cook at home option offers customers a fresh fine dining experience at home by providing instructions through social media and fresh ingredients.

A Pizza Restaurant in Ireland Pivoted into meal kits as part of their new business model. **The Dough Bros Pizza Kits**



We recognise the opportunity, what next?

A good place to start is looking at your Business Model:

A Business Model is a plan for the successful operation of a business, identifying **sources of revenue**, the **intended customer base**, **products**, and details of **financing**.

The key components of a business model should include building empathy with your target customers, the market, organisation strengths and challenges (from your SWOT analysis), essential elements of the product/service, and how it will be sold.

SWOT Analysis:

A SWOT analysis is a simple, but powerful, framework for leveraging any businesses or project's **S**trengths, improving **W**eaknesses, minimizing **T**hreats, and taking the greatest possible advantage of **O**pportunities. SWOT analysis is a process where you can identify the internal and external factors that will affect a business's or projects future performance.



We Have Our Vision what next?

An effective business model helps you to figure out elements such as:

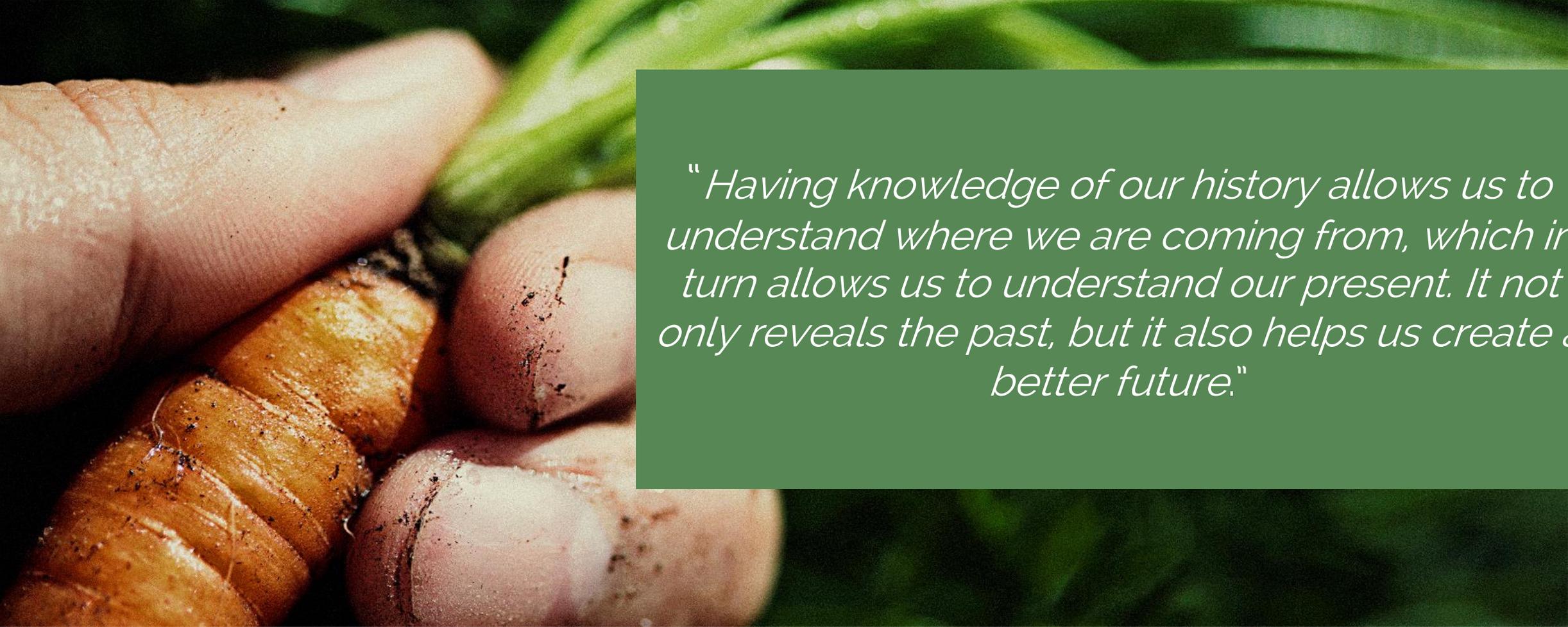
- Your business concept
- What problem are you solving and for whom?
- How will you create customer value?
- How will your product or service get to customers?
- How will your business stay competitive?
- All revenue and costs you can anticipate.

We Have Our Vision what next?

Answering these questions:

- **Your business concept** - Promoting and restoring our culinary heritage
- **What problem are you solving and for whom?** - Preventing the loss of our cultural heritage. (For the local community) Preventing your business from stagnating. (For you and your employees)
- **How will you create customer value?** - Re-inventing recipes and telling the story of our culinary heritage.
- **How will your product or service get to customers?** Through your food service business and by developing partnerships within tourism.
- **How will your business stay competitive?** By constantly innovating your menu and service through the use of student placements and having a vision.
- **All revenue and costs you can anticipate.** Participating in the CIF programme should increase revenue by re-awakening the business and bringing it into the future. Student placements will not cost more than regular staff.

3. Explore and learn



“Having knowledge of our history allows us to understand where we are coming from, which in turn allows us to understand our present. It not only reveals the past, but it also helps us create a better future.”

Exploring & Learning

Culinary business owners are always learning but may not be aware of the formal description of Lifelong Learning. Lifelong learning is the "ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated" pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons.

A culture of learning in a culinary business, for you as the business owner, your team and your student placement, is a very valuable asset that brings endless business development and learning opportunities.



Exploring & Learning

As part of Cook it Forward, we are encouraging you to explore or encourage your staff to explore the culinary heritage of your area or region.

Navigate your way by digging deeper, talk to locals, and grandparents, read old recipe books or journals, speak to farmers and food producers of the region to discover your past then share the culinary story. Refer to Module 3 and our 'Places on a Plate'



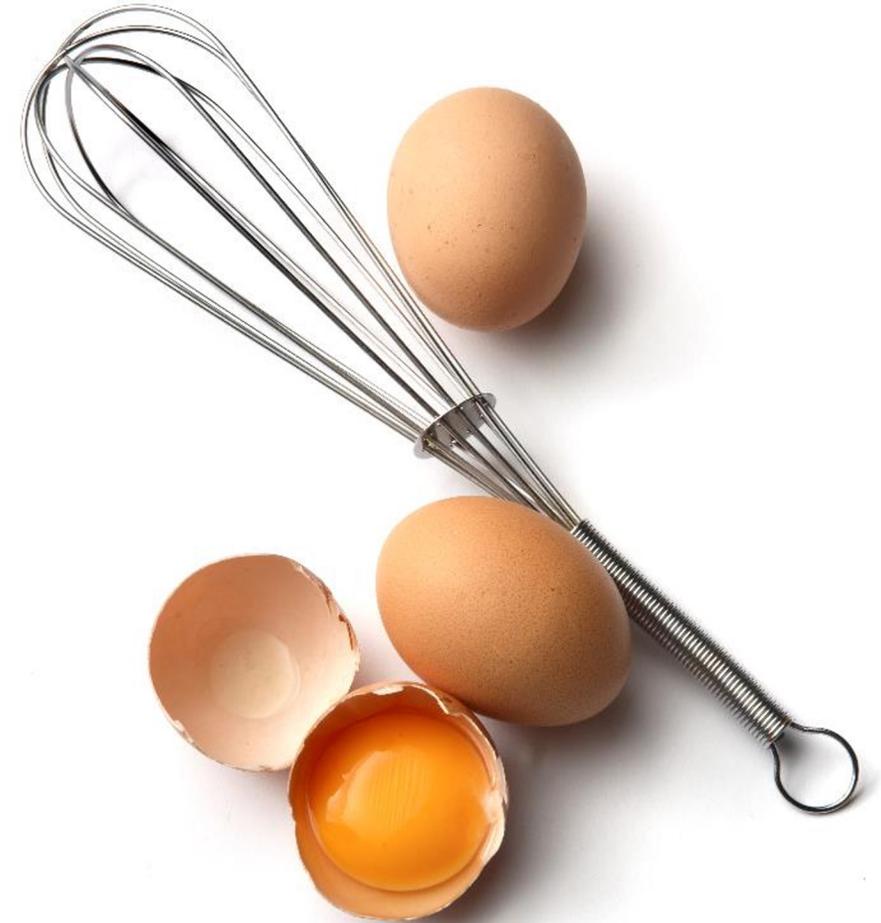
Exploring & Learning

There are several ways to learn about your region's Culinary heritage.

- Food networks - [Dublin Food Chain](#)
- Online Forums - [Top 25 Food Forums](#),
- Local Heritage Groups - [Food Paths Network](#)
- Facebook pages - [Food on the Edge](#)
- Local libraries/museums - [FOOD Museums](#)

[Terra Madre - Slow Food](#)

[Communities](#) promoting a new approach to gastronomy, based on the defence of biodiversity, environmental protection, and respect for local cultures and traditions.



02

Creating a 4-step work plan of the students' role



A 4-Step work plan

Work-placements offer students of today the opportunity to prepare for the challenges of tomorrow.

Students can become familiar with the skills and attitudes needed by modern business and recognise that the demands of working life are undergoing rapid and constant change.

Competitive advantage for all will best be served if students can acquire the right skills and attitudes.

Having a plan in place makes this more achievable.

1

Induction into workplace

2

Working like an employee

3

Fostering creativity

4

Recording outcomes

1. Induction into workplace

Induction refers to the process of getting new employees acquainted with your business, helping them to settle in, and giving them the information required for them to become a valuable team member, it includes items like:

- Introductions to their team/supervisor
- Necessary paperwork
- Outline of their role/ projects
- Health & safety / disciplinary policies
- Schedule of review(s)



2. Working as an employee

Although students tend to only be working within your Culinary business for a defined short period, they are still expected to immerse themselves as typical staff and:

- Carry out assigned tasks/projects
- Be a team player
- Adhere to company rules & timelines
- Report accidents/incidents
- Have the culinary business's reputation and success in mind always.



3. Fostering Creativity

As a student in a classroom, it is often difficult to display your creativity and ideas. However, in real-life workplaces, it is hoped that they will be given the opportunity to share their ideas along with their technical and theoretical skills to boost and enhance your culinary heritage projects. Gaining real-life experience in project development will lead to the students building valuable experience and confidence.



4. Recording outcomes

Before the students enter your workplace, their VET educators will have performed a **baseline assessment**.

Both you and the student will be asked to give end-of-placement **feedback** to determine the level of learning achieved and benefit of the programme.

However, re-invented menu items and increases in sales/customer satisfaction could also be deemed as great outcomes.



03

The student's role: expectations and commitments



Expectations & Commitments

As part of the work placement, both employers and students each have their own set of expectations and commitments. It is important that these are discussed before the commencement of the work-placement.

All involved want this experience to be **mutually beneficial** where employers gain insight into new and up-to-date cooking techniques, new approaches, and learn about the importance of digitalization in the culinary and hospitality world.

Students simultaneously are gaining real-life experience and are learning about the history of the region's food and get the opportunity to re-invent and be creative and consequently are adding value to your business.



The Student's Role

The term 'work experience' generally refers to a specified period of time that a student spends within your business, and during which provides exposure to real tasks required of the business. These enable the student to gain firsthand experience of the processes, structures, interdependencies, relationships and protocols of your business. Some work experience placements offer people the chance to try their hand at particular tasks, others simply provide an opportunity to watch and learn.

But as part of the Cook it Forward programme we feel student involvement and participation are key to the success of the work placement.



Expectations of Employers

You as employers will be responsible for ensuring the student has the opportunity to undertake a range of activities, not just observation or work shadowing to give the student the experience of real work.

You will be expected to treat the student as a real employee and undertake review and supervision to promote further learning and development.

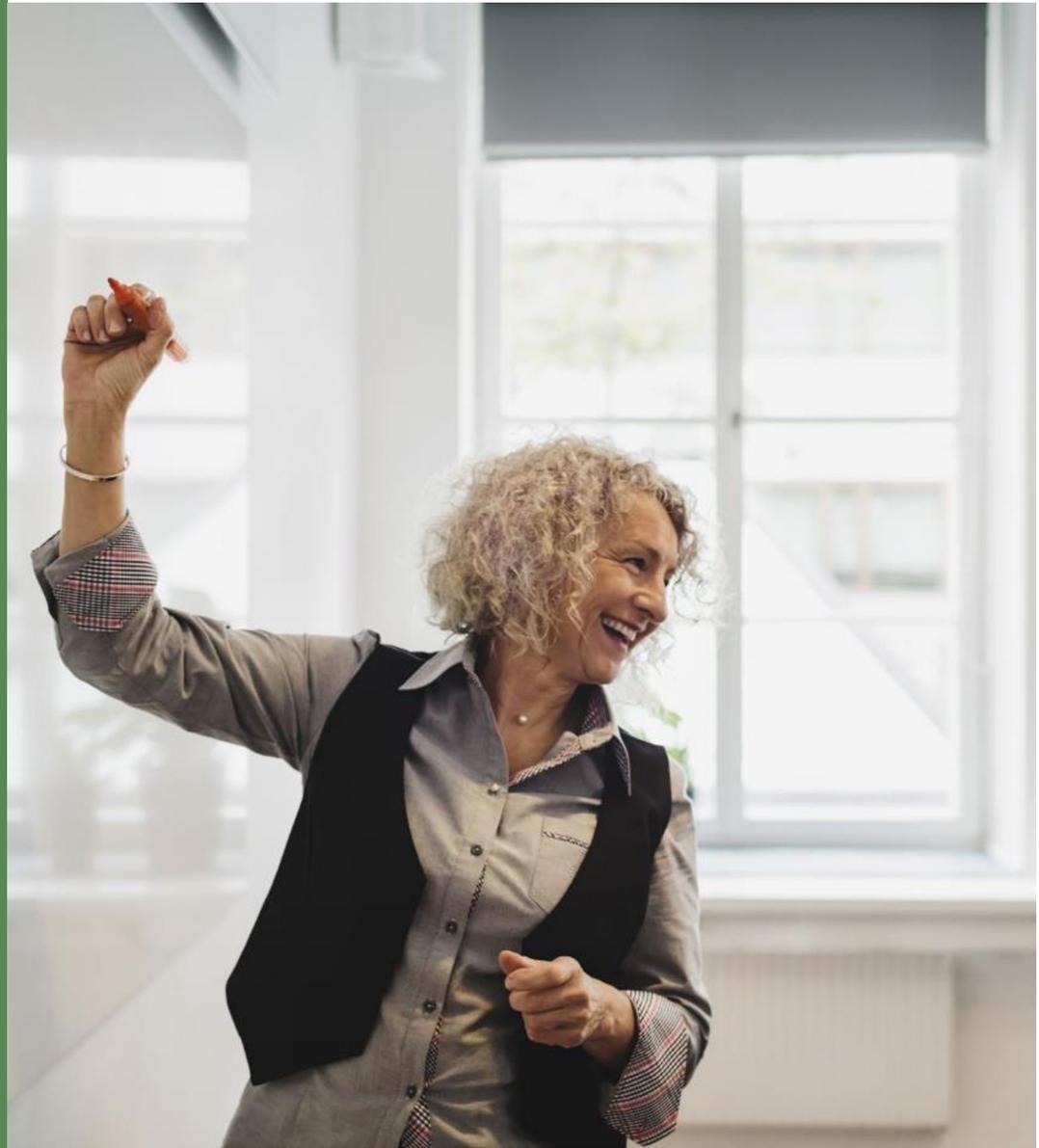
To improve competitiveness, it is vital for education and business to work together to ensure that young people are better prepared for the world of work, with the necessary skills and motivation.



Expectations of Educator

The school or learning centre that the student is coming from also plays a critical role in an effective work placement by:

- supporting the student to identify their strengths and weaknesses
- developing realistic placement objectives with the student which can be shared with the employer
- providing students with timely and well-targeted support prior during and post placement
- ensuring work placement is fit-for-purpose and will support the student journey.



Commitments

As in any position, the student's role in your workplace carries with it certain standard commitments:

- Punctuality
- Suitable personal appearance
- Adherence to hygiene practices
- Adherence to safety rules
- Collaborative work ethic
- Quality feedback
- Willingness to listen and learn
- Willingness to share ideas and skills



Commitment to each other

All stakeholders in a work-placement have a certain amount of commitment to each other. **Respect, gratitude, and appropriate effort is required from all parties.**

To ensure that learning is embedded and that employability skills do not fade, educators should aim to continue the theme of 'work placement' with students. This may through establishing ongoing relationships with employers for future involvement. Students should be encouraged to set up follow-up objectives such as helping other students to prepare for placement- 'pay it forward' and employers should be open to evaluations and feedback so that programmes can be continuously improved and developed.



04

Focusing on the assignments



Students Assignments

A significant learning section of the Cook it Forward Project is the creation of a Student Assignment 'recipe book/collection'.

In this section, we encourage students in each country to carry out the re-invention of Cultural and heritage foods or dishes from our respective countries.

Through these assignments, we want to ignite the creative sparks within each of them and for the students to learn how to work either solo or in a collaborative fashion thus enhancing their independence or team working skills, while also introducing them to their Culinary past.

[Click here to discover our online repository of assignments in the Student Learning materials section](#)



The benefit of Student Assignments...

Central to all student activities in Cook it Forward is fostering an outward view and a connection to stakeholders in the hospitality and gastronomy sector. The student assignments helps this process by following these steps:

- **Step 1:** To encourage students to investigate their own network (local restaurants, parents, neighbours, grandparents, etc.) to learn about intangible cultural heritage in the form of culinary traditions, ancient recipes, forgotten regional ingredients and traditional cooking techniques.
- **Step 2:** Proactively approach the regional network of culinary stakeholders to discover trends and new techniques that are being used in the sector. Students will learn the latest trends in the hospitality and gastronomy sector directly from the world-of-work.
- **Step 3:** Connect the culinary traditions to contemporary trends and new techniques (e.g. 3D printing, fusion cooking, sustainability, and the use of regional products) and refurbish the recipes and cooking techniques. Students will brainstorm (in international groups) about innovative ways to lift the old recipes and cooking techniques to the 21st-century demand.
- **Step 4:** Propose their new inventions to regional stakeholders and execute their proposed solutions in close cooperation with the culinary world-of-work stakeholders.

Sample Assignments

Lithuania:

One assignment encourages students to revisit the past study food and traditions from Smetoniene times.

They are then asked to recreate a menu from this era with 5 courses and in doing so learn about their culinary heritage and explore flavour combinations and reason why these dishes were served in the past.



Student Assignments:

Ireland:

All the assignments revolved around re-inventing forgotten foods that would have had traditional culinary & cultural significance. E.g.:

- Coddle
- Seaweed
- Boxy
- Nose to tail Pig
- Cabbage

Therefore, educating the students in their culinary heritage and getting them to use their skills and creativity to keep these foods alive.



Student Assignments:

The Netherlands:

The assignments from the Netherlands not only focused on forgotten seafood and vegetables but on traditional cooking methods to evoke a sense of curiosity in the students about their culinary past. They are encouraged to create new and improved dishes with these ingredients and to consider current and future trends that are evident, like vegan, low salt, gluten-free, lactose-free.



Student Assignments:

Spain:

The Spanish students were assigned tasks that encouraged them to explore their culinary heritage and to study the products and old cooking techniques of the Extremadura region.

The importance of bridging the generation gap was also highlighted and the benefit of work placements for preserving our culinary heritage.



The impact...

The aim of working on concrete and real-life case studies in the form of culinary cultural heritage is knowledge generation and valorisation. All steps in the process are undertaken by students and guided and coordinated by VET college teachers.

Students learn to collaborate with each other and to work with/for real businesses (restaurant, hotels, caterers, organisations active in sustainable food chains, (culinary) cultural heritage, etc.) which leads to competences needed in future working life.

Cook it Forward aims to empower young European VET students and encourage them to develop their employability through creative thinking, curiosity and inquiry, critical thinking, social and communications skills, confidence, and practical skills.





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www.cookitforward.eu

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