

ESS celebrates 100th Student graduating from Junior Chef Academy

2 years ago



ESS, part of Compass Group UK & Ireland, has been delivering social value to local communities through a Junior Chef Academy (JCA) provided to schoolchildren in the areas around its sites for the past three years. The company recently celebrated the graduation of its 100th student with a special event held at Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC) in Dartmouth.

The ten-week cookery course is delivered by ESS chefs as an after-school club and aims to:

- Recognise and teach cooking as an essential life skill.
- Encourage an interest in, and engagement with, food at an early age.
- Educate and encourage young people to consider careers in hospitality.
- Enable ESS teams to engage with local communities.

All costs are covered by Compass and Brakes Foodservice.

Students are taught fundamental cookery skills, how to create dishes using a range of different foods and, of course, how to wash up! Participants then host a course graduation where they showcase their new skills to parents, teachers and ESS team members.

ESS won the 2023 IWFM Impact Award for Social Value and was recently Highly Commended at the 2024 Global FM Awards of Excellence for its delivery of the programme.

Young people who have benefitted from the JCA include students in mainstream education, as well as those with special educational needs and behavioural and attendance issues.

Feedback is overwhelmingly positive, with all attendees from a recent course stating that they enjoyed participating and 100% of parents reporting that their children learned new skills and cooked or helped to cook meals since.

Enthusiastic and promising students are invited to complete work experience with ESS where they learn all aspects of foodservice. As a result, nine young people have joined ESS as apprentices.

Jacob Banting from the first intake has now achieved his Level 2 apprenticeship, worked at high profile events, medalled in the skills class at International Salon Culinare and finished in the top eight at the prestigious Compass Apprentice Chef of the Year competition. He has recently been promoted to commis chef.

The 100th graduate was one of a cohort completing the course at Exeter College in Devon under the enthusiastic leadership of chefs from ESS' Defence sector, led by Group Executive Chef Lee Brooking. The company is currently part way through another course at a school in Wolverhampton.

The JCA was developed by the Compass Apprenticeships Team and is available to all areas of the business. Courses have previously been delivered to schools in Portsmouth, Stoke, Leicester, Wolverhampton, Newport and Northamptonshire. The initiative is supported by Brakes Foodservice who sponsor the programme and provide all attendees with chef jackets.

The JCA supports Compass Group UK & Ireland's 'Social Promise' which has committed to enhance opportunities for a million people by 2030.

Kelly Davey, Employer Services Lead at Exeter College commented:

"Exeter College appreciates the collaboration with ESS and is thrilled to host their Junior Chef Academy in our Skills Kitchen. The feedback we've received from both students and parents highlights the significant impact of the JCA. Not only does it bolster confidence in the kitchen and bring new culinary skills, but it also ignites a passion for cooking that we hope will lead to further education or apprenticeships in the culinary sector. We're proud to be a part of this initiative that not only enriches the lives of our students but also aligns with our collective vision for social impact and community engagement."

Chris Pringle, Brakes Foodservice Corporate Account Director commented: "Brakes has worked closely with Compass for many years, and we are proud to support the Junior Chef Academy as it aligns perfectly to our own values and purpose – connecting the world to share food and care for one another."

Jacob Banting, ESS Commis Chef, commented: "I've learnt so much since completing the Junior Chef Academy and joining ESS as an apprentice. In addition to my training which has covered a range of cookery skills and techniques, I've grown as a person and am now much more confident. I've now completed my Level 2 apprenticeship and competed in several competitions which are great for getting out of your comfort zone. I love working as part of a team and I can't thank my colleagues enough for everything they've taught me."

Bob Gray, Managing Director – ESS Defence, Marine & Aerospace, added: "I'm exceptionally proud of the way our team have embraced the Junior Chef Academy and delivered it in the communities around some of the Defence sites we operate in. The programme has the power to instil a lifelong interest in food and we've heard from graduates that the positive impacts are being felt by their whole families. On top of this,

it's wonderful to see young people who have completed the course starting out on exciting careers within our business. I'm passionate about extending the reach and impact that this programme is having."