

CERTIFICATION

Certification: The Significance of the Journey

By Kirk T. Bachmann, CEC®, M.Ed.

It was Ernest Hemingway who said, "It is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters, in the end." This quote is never truer than when discussing one chef's journey toward ACF certification.

Farley Kaiser, CCC®, culinary arts department chair at Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Mendota Heights, Minn., who began working in a small, family owned restaurant as a high school student, set her sights on a career in the culinary industry at an early age. Her journey toward certification began in 2006, when she accepted the challenge to solidify her talents through the ACF certification process. She was so nervous about the practical exam that she didn't even tell her family about her intentions to seek chef de cuisine certification until she achieved her goal.

From Kaiser's perspective, the ACF certification process was a journey that included numerous intrinsic benefits. Investing time and energy in personal and professional development is historically a well-respected endeavor throughout academia, and culinary education is no different. ACF, through its certification

process, provides a great opportunity to culinarians everywhere to highlight their skills and take pride in their accomplishments. While Kaiser describes the certification process as "shaky scary," she leveraged much assistance and support during her journey from colleagues and students alike.

She likes to joke that "Le Cordon Bleu pays me *not* to teach pastry classes," thus, her love of the culinary arts is always on display. As an educator, she insisted on having students assist her in preparation for both the written and practical portions of the certification process. "Such lessons cannot be taught in a standard classroom setting," she says, so the opportunity for her students to engage in the process and to witness the efforts necessary to achieve personal and professional goals was invaluable.

In spite of the blizzard that accompanied her trek to the test site, she arrived on time for the practical exam. She immediately noticed that she was the only woman testing, and the fact that three of her male colleagues were also attempting the practical exam only added to the already building anxiety.



Farley Kaiser teaches a class at Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Minneapolis/St. Paul.

Kaiser recalls thinking that she was within three hours of either success or failure. While she was comforted by the fact that she successfully passed the written exam, the stress of the practical exam wasn't quite as "fun" as she had envisioned. But even after her *espagnole* sauce spilled all over the workstation, she remained focused and committed to her goal. Fortunately, this was after the successful poultry fabrication for her chicken Bercy. In fact, looking back, she attributes part of her success that evening to the total cleanup she completed of her workstation. She recovered nicely from the *espagnole* spill, with some minor embarrassment and little time lost.

In the end, she proved that it was, in fact, the journey that mattered. From that point on in her certification journey, Kaiser worked neater and cleaner than ever before, always careful not to have another spill or let her nerves get the better of her.

Having successfully achieved certification, she is a proud member of the ACF family of certified chefs, displaying her CCC® certification proudly and with respect. Kaiser eventually shared her success with her family, and she says being able to explain this journey to her daughter one day made her every nervous moment priceless.

Kirk T. Bachmann, CEC®, M.Ed., is vice president of academic affairs for Le Cordon Bleu Schools in North America and a member of the ACF Certification Commission.

ACF CERTIFICATION ON THE HIGH SEAS

In 2007, Royal Caribbean International launched an ACF certification program aboard its global fleet of 21 cruise ships. The program continues to grow, and more than 30 ACF Approved Certification Evaluators (ACE) have had the pleasure of evaluating a truly talented group of culinarians.

Royal Caribbean's culinary trainers, Craig Cornick, CEC, and Joachim Obermeier, CEC, guide the certification program and overcome the unique challenges that onboard

certification presents. Candidates study for exams between ports, often after working 10-12 hours a day, seven days a week.

Royal Caribbean Director of Culinary Operations Josef Jungwirth, CEC, CCA, believes that certification is an essential tool in meeting the company's philosophy. "As we strive to exceed standards and provide competitive recruiting and retention, certification offers a valuable succession plan for cooks and chefs," he says.