

Life

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For the love of food

**Chef duo launches
Sense of Taste to
turn out quality
chefs, writes
Esther
Lewis**



FOOD, and everything about the industry, has been in the spotlight for several years with the rise of celebrity chefs, Masterchefs and Braaimasters. Now, two top city chefs are looking to change the face of the local industry by improving the quality of chefs being produced.

Peter Ayub and Angie Boyd, who have been in the industry for more than 20 years, will open the Sense of Taste Culinary Arts Cooking School on February 3.

For many years, Boyd and Ayub noticed that the industry wasn't really retaining its graduates. "Between 70 and 80 percent would leave the industry after three years. After their training, they go out there and just get lost," says Ayub.

Another observation was that several schools were producing poor quality graduates who displayed a lack of knowledge about the industry and food. Boyd and Ayub are hoping to remedy that.

They found that training didn't always prepare the students for the often gruelling working conditions.

"Masterchef and those programmes have given kids the false impression that this is about glamour. It takes a good 15 years before you get to be a Jamie Oliver," says Ayub.

Because of the many television programmes dedicated to food, this has become a popular choice for school-leavers and even those looking to change their careers.



INTO THE FIRE

Chefs Angie Boyd and Peter Ayub are set and ready to open a chef school called Sense of Taste Culinary Arts Cooking School

PICTURES: DAVID RITCHIE

Ayub says many people believe that if they know someone who can cook, they can take their pension packages and open a restaurant. They believe that if nobody else, their friends will come.

"They don't. After a few weeks, the business has to close," he says.

Ayub believes that just like an accounting firm shouldn't be opened without qualified accountants, nobody should open a restaurant without having a qualified chef on board.

Prospective chefs are also under-prepared for the back-breaking hard work. "When I started out, I had a young child. Nobody cared. I had to work 15-hour days, and had two days off per month," says Boyd.

Boyd has been cooking since she was six years old and says it was all she ever wanted to do. She did a three-year diploma, and worked for 10 years. She specialised as a pastry

chef at five-star hotels. She opened the award-winning Vanilla House Patisserie, where her main business is wedding cakes. After paying her dues, she works smarter and doesn't spend 15 hours a day on her feet.

While Boyd is the queen of pastry, Ayub's speciality is the savoury.

Unlike Boyd, he still works seven days a week. He has worked abroad, opening restaurants, and starting new projects. The latest is gourmet hot dog restaurant, On A Roll, in Mowbray.

Ayub, who owns catering company Sense of Taste, has catered for several dignitaries, power couple Beyonce and Jay-Z, even Kim and Khloe Kardashian.

But he reiterates, the industry is not purely glamorous. "You need the physical ability of a motor mechanic, and the finesse of an artist. It's a beautiful thing if you love it. We want students who love this industry."

The course is full time and will run for two years, and only 16 spots will be available. The kitchen is in Maitland.

At most cooking schools, students do one demo in the morning, and spend the afternoon cleaning. Because they're hiring a full kitchen scullery team, students will be able to do two demos daily.

They will also do two six-month internships, with lecturers ensuring adequate training and mentorship.

Ayub and Boyd are giving themselves five years to become the top school in Africa.

SCHOLARSHIPS

The school will be awarding two scholarships worth R106 000 each. Scholarship applicants must be aged 18 to 25 and write a motivational letter to chef@senseoftaste.co.za. More details about the requirements can be found on www.senseoftaste.co.za