

BOYS' TOWN VTC SERVES UP WORLD CLASS TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES *for George Cooper*



George Cooper's journey with the food industry began at the Tacius Golding High School in St. Catherine. He made the critical decision to pursue Food and Beverage as a career and in 2007 that journey took him to HEART's Boys' Town Vocational Training Centre (VTC) in Kingston to be trained and certified as a Food and Beverage attendant.

Though grateful for this initial training and certification which provided him with employment, George had his sights firmly set on bigger things. He aspired to become a chef and to be the best at this craft. Pursuant to this dream, Cooper enrolled in the Level 3 Chef de Partie programme, also at Boys' Town. "I returned to Boys' Town VTC because the hospitality I was shown there is second to none. The instructors place an emphasis on self-development, upgrading your skills, preparing you for entrepreneurship and success."

To say that Cooper distinguished himself in the course is an understatement. He was awesome. He won many awards at culinary competitions across the island, including a silver medal at the prestigious Taste of Jamaica Competition in 2016. For this achievement he was specially recognized by the WorldSkills Club, of which he is a member. Cooper was also the champion of the JCDC's Eastern 2016 Star Chef and in 2017 copped silver at the same competition.

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"The experience at Boys' Town was tremendous. What I learnt in and out of the kitchen helped to propel me rapidly into the industry. With training, certification and my warm personality, I found myself ahead of persons who had been in the field for decades!"

Immediately after finishing studies at Boys' Town, Cooper landed a great opportunity as the personal assistant of well-known chef Jacqui Tyson. This, he considers one of his greatest accomplishments as a chef, working for one month under the tutelage of the grand dame of culinary delights.

Since then, Cooper has been a part of Tyson's Diamond Team which caters to hundreds and at times, thousands of guests at various events islandwide.

Bitten by the entrepreneurial bug, Cooper has started his own catering company, "Cooper's Delight" which has been in operation for one year. He attributes a great deal of his business know-how and confidence to lessons learnt at Boys' Town. With a permanent staff of two, Cooper's Delight caters at weddings, funerals, graduations, gospel shows and other events. He also hires part-time staff when the company has catering assignments for larger groups, sometimes up to 300 persons.

Cooper is happily married and has two children whom he hopes will share and appreciate his love for the culinary arts just as much as their father. He plans to make Cooper's Delight a household name in Jamaica and beyond.

