

# Peel Portrait: Jonathan Nevin, Chef Meadowvale Secondary School



Jonathan Nevin accomplished something remarkable in May 2007. He won a gold medal from Skills Canada - Ontario without the benefit of in-school instruction in his discipline. Jonathan won the culinary arts competition on the basis of his on-the-job work experience at West 50 Pourhouse and Grill restaurant in Mississauga. Meadowvale Secondary School, his home high school, does not offer courses in culinary arts or hospitality, but through the school's strong community connections and its excellent co-operative education program, it did provide Jonathan with an opportunity to receive the training he needed. Based on his success, Jonathan was chosen to represent Ontario in the Skills Canada national competition in Saskatoon in June.

Although Jonathan has long been interested in food preparation, his career path has been neither straight nor easy. He worked part-time at Wendy's and McDonald's during his early teen years, but lost interest in academics and dropped out of school at age 16. His passion to train as a chef brought him back to Meadowvale Secondary School in September 2006. His co-operative education teacher, Suzanne Primeau, found a work placement for him at West 50 Pourhouse and Grill under the supervision of chef and owner Olaf Mertens.

From the beginning things went well at West 50. Jonathan was selected "Employee of the Year" and loved the work. "It felt like family here," he stated. "I have learned a great deal from Olaf, who has given much of his time to help me prepare for Skills Canada competitions. Work is now something I look forward to."

His serious interest in becoming a chef led to registration as an apprentice under the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship (OYAP) program. This ensures he receives formal apprenticeship credit for the hours he works and the skills he demonstrates on the job. Things have proceeded to the point where West 50 has hired him to put in additional hours at the restaurant after school and on weekends. Jonathan's current plans are to earn his Ontario Secondary School Diploma, then work to complete his apprenticeship.

Watching Jonathan prepare desserts is like watching a craftsman at work. His skill and passion for what he does are clearly evident. His hard work and his success on the job and in skills competitions will likely make it possible for Jonathan to achieve his ultimate career goal, opening his own restaurant.