

Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts



Le Cordon Bleu has come a long way since its inception in 1895. From its humble beginnings as a group of French chefs performing cooking demonstrations, through its ascension to become the model of culinary excellence, to its expansion to campuses all around the world, Le Cordon Bleu's reputation has preceded it and validated itself time and time again. Le Cordon Bleu has become synonymous with quality, and the students and faculty of Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Mendota Heights are proud to uphold such tradition.

Our tour of the facility (which was built specifically for Le Cordon Bleu) was conducted by Chef/Instructor Dan Vasterling. Chef Dan's resume is extensive, having worked in all aspects of the restaurant/food service industry. He teaches basic through advanced techniques, and appears as comfortable in the classroom as he does in the kitchen. Chef Dan clearly knows how to have fun, while adhering to the meticulous and "stereotypical French" instruction style offered by Le Cordon Bleu.

The school hosts 750 students, few of whom hail from the Twin Cities. Students are looking to complete a Pastry and Baking program (12 months in duration) or a Culinary Arts

program (15-18 months). The Culinary Arts program will cost students approximately \$40,000, but will also gain the student an Associate of Applied Science degree.



Le Cordon Bleu offers intense, repetitive training, jokingly referred to as "Rubik's Cube Instruction," and students are held to incredibly high standards while enrolled in their respective programs. Professionalism is demanded at all times. Actions, attitude, appearance (and eventually ability) must all convey those of a Chef. Uniform inspections are done daily, and a student will be sent home for the smallest infraction. And as students are only allowed to miss two days per quarter, being sent home is not an option. Chef Dan informed us that there is no hesitation to fail a student, as the school reflects each of its graduates. Graduation is important, considering the school boasts an impressive 100% job placement.

Culinary art is exactly that – art. Le Cordon Bleu understands this and encourages creativity, but asks that students respect classic techniques. Chef Dan also stresses the importance of keeping equipment in good repair, learning to grow with the industry by accepting new technology, and embracing surprises. Surprises are opportunities for you to do something special.

After the tour, dinner was served at the Minnesota Room, Le Cordon Bleu’s student-run restaurant located on the campus of Brown College. The meal was prepared by Chef Ryan Westrum and Chef Toufik Halimi along with a team of students, providing a top-notch fine dining experience. The menu consisted of Carrot Soup with Pumpkinseed Oil and Arugula Puree, Frisee Salad with Blue Cheese Crumbles and Roasted Pear, Wildberry Sorbet, Steak and Salmon with a Port Wine Reduction served with Mashed Potatoes, Carrots and Parsnips. This was all followed by a delightful dessert and coffee.

When the student/chefs addressed the group, they underlined what we’d already learned about the school’s devotion to quality. They expressed the importance of communication in the workplace and were optimistic that their

passion for their field would take them far.

Testimonials

"The tour and dinner at Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts was eye opening. It demonstrated the application of quality standards to the fine dining experience. The volunteer students that prepared our dinner did a fantastic job of execution. I was expecting good food, what I received was one of the best dinners I've had in a long time. It was professionally served, paced nicely, visually pleasing and very easy on the palate. Merci!"

-Steve Kindom

"The artistry and attention to detail was extraordinary."

-Brad Gapp

"The chef students seemed to enjoy their success. Food preparation was high quality and absolutely delicious."

-Colleen Halpine