



## **WHY A RAMSAY FAN IS A MAN OF EXCELLENT TASTE**

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My dad has been a chef all his life but it wasn't until I started working at The Spotgate Inn that I really took an interest in cooking.

My mum and dad took over the pub and they wanted someone to work in the kitchen doing simple tasks such as preparing starters, vegetables and pot washing. It was a great job for me to have while I was still at school, and since then I've gained a lot of experience as I've worked my way up.

Four years ago I entered the Staffordshire Young Chef of Tomorrow competition, but I didn't even get third place.

I was very disappointed and remember telling them that I would be back next year and that I would win.

I did go back and, true to my word, I won first place, which gave me the opportunity to spend a week working at the Michelin-starred restaurant Hibiscus in Ludlow.

After that, I went in for the Taste of Staffordshire Master Chef competition and last year, I came third, saying again that I would be back the year after to win. I won it earlier this year.

I got £1,000, a trophy and the chance to do some work experience in a top restaurant in America.

In the competition, they give you two ingredients to work from - in this instance it was live crayfish and wild seabass - and from there we had to create a three-course meal for two.

The judges said they were really impressed and I was overwhelmed when they announced that I had won. It takes me one step closer to achieving my dream of owning my own restaurant.

In this business, you have to win your work experience and this has given me a brilliant opportunity.

Gordon Ramsay is a big inspiration to me and when I finished college I had the opportunity to meet him. I asked him outright if he had a job for me and he said that he would have to see whether I was any good. He invited me to work in his Claridge's restaurant with Mark Sargeant for the day. Mark said that I was good enough but because I had to live in the centre of London, the cost of living was too high for me on what I was earning. So I only worked there a few months.

I also worked at The Dorchester hotel while I was at college, which again is something that has given me invaluable experience.

I don't know what it is about cooking that I enjoy so much. But I love to take a raw ingredient and turn it into something that everyone would like to eat.

Describe your perfect weekend?

I would spend my perfect weekend in London with my girlfriend Kara Winkworth. We've been together four-and-a-half years now and it would be great to have enough money to stay in a posh hotel, drink good wine and eat in really nice restaurants.

Lie in or rise and shine?

It depends on what I've done the night before, but ideally I like to get up in the morning and enjoy the sunshine with a nice cup of tea outside.

Get cooking, eat out or take-away?

I'd have to say get cooking for obvious reasons.

If I had more spare time I'd ...

Spend it with my family. My sister lives in London and Kara's dad lives in Spain so if I did have more time on my hands I'd have to spend it with them. Even though I work with my mum and dad, we don't always see that much of each other so it would be nice to have time together every now and again to catch up properly.

If I won the lottery I'd ...

Buy my own top-class restaurant somewhere and employ the best staff I could. That would be my dream.

By this time next year I hope ...

I can't really say because of everything that's happening at the moment.

I think I could see myself working in America but if not then I'd just keep getting as much experience as I possibly could and work towards achieving my dream.

To contact the Spotgate Inn, call 01889 505277.