

Biography of Riley Bennett

Terrace Chef



Photo By: James O'Mara and Kate Ryan

Chef Riley Bennett's career was determined far before he began his first day at SAIT Culinary School. It started as a very young child, where he spent his days with local growers on the Okanagan family farm taking root at age 13 when he started helping out in the kitchen of his family's restaurant. His passion for the Okanagan continues to develop and now comes alive through his fresh, locally inspired menu creations served daily on the Terrace Restaurant.

Reflecting back to his childhood, Bennett knows that his deep appreciation for local produce came by watching his family and neighbourhood farmers spend countless hours on their farms, cultivating each seedling and harvesting the bounty. The circle was complete when he saw the enjoyment of guests in the wholesome, local food at his family-owned restaurant in

the north Okanagan.

Bennett quickly enrolled in the professional cooking program offered in high school, teaching him foundational culinary skills and providing further inspiration to pursue his passion at SAIT college in Calgary, Alberta. While there, Bennett apprenticed at The Westin, working in every aspect of the culinary brigade.

During his years at SAIT, Bennett traveled to Singapore with four other colleagues to participate in one of the largest international culinary competitions, Food Hotel Asia, where his team successfully placed in the very top rankings. His time in Singapore left an indelible impression on his palate, which winery guests can now experience in his Flavours of Singapore cooking class at the winery.

Following his culinary experiences in Calgary, Bennett journeyed to Vancouver Island to work as assistant chef under Chef Edward Tuson at Sooke Harbour House, one of BC's finest seafood restaurants, which specializes in seasonal, organic and wild food. He was awed by their edible landscape of over 200 edible herbs, flowers, and vegetables and inspired by the Slow Food culinary philosophy of the Proprietors Sinclair and Frederique Philip.

Chef Bennett's passion of local produce can be seen when he is in the culinary varietal

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garden at Mission Hill Family Estate. "My grandmother, who is one of the best cooks I know, taught me a few tricks in the kitchen along with the importance of local and self-sustainable. Their garden is larger than their home and she spent hours gardening to provide for many delicious and memorable family meals."

After a short entrepreneurial adventure to Ontario, he returned to his roots in the Okanagan to continue his culinary career and knew he belonged at Mission Hill after

seeing Proprietor Anthony von Mandl's passion and vision. Bennett began as a Chef de Parti in 2007 at the winery, graduating to Sous Chef in May, 2008 and subsequently in September 2009 as one of the new generation of culinary experts at the winery, was promoted to Terrace Restaurant Chef where he strives to exceed the expectations of each guest who dines on the Terrace while showcasing the Okanagan, his beloved home, at its very best.

