

“Hospitality is not taken seriously as a career and it should be”

# Learning from critical feedback

MERYL NAIDOO

HOBART hospitality training organisation Industrylink has been turning out top-notch chefs and hospitality workers for almost two years.

Now the specialist in hospitality and commercial cookery has opened Kuzina restaurant in the former Casablanca premises in North Hobart.

Industrylink and Kuzina manager Nicholas Platon has spent the past 20 years working in hospitality across Australia.

In 2002 he opened the Greek restaurant Athena's on the Pier with a business partner and, after selling out in 2005, wanted to make a difference to the state's hospitality culture.

The training school idea grew.

It won the 2007 Tasmanian Training Provider of the Year awards.

It currently has more than 300 students and employs nine staff.

Students gain skills and knowledge and are awarded national accreditation upon successful completion of their studies.

Mr Platon said Kuzina gave students the opportunity to train during the day and put their skills to the test in the evening when the restaurant was open to the public.

“The majority of our students work for other organisations and we help them get their national accreditation,” he said.

Diners evaluate their performance at every session except on Sundays.

Mr Platon's passion for hospitality drives his ideas.

This is his third school — his first was on Hamilton Island in 1997 and the second in New South Wales in 2000.

He said Hobart needed training because the level of service was disappointing.

“Hospitality is not taken seriously as a career and it should be,” he said.

“For me it's important to spread this vision.

“The feedback has been excellent and the support from the locals and the public in general has also been very encouraging.”

Mr Platon said it was an opportunity like no other in Tasmania for young, up-and-coming hospitality leaders.

Kuzina head chef and trainer Stephen Lunn, with the help of apprentices, put together the “traditional French with a contemporary twist” menu.

Patisserie chef Gareth Patterson studied and worked in France.



**SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE:** Kuzina restaurant head chef and trainer Stephen Lunn, centre, gives instructions to budding chefs in the kitchen. Picture: SAM ROSEWARNE