

Placement: Culinary Skills

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Placement: Culinary Skills (BMGM4002)

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I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

During this portfolio, I will be using Kolb's experiential learning cycle to reflect on my experience working in a professional kitchen during my placement in El Pescador. There will be three written elements each reflecting on different sectors of the knowledge I developed during my placement hours. The first element will be based on my culinary skills such as learning knife skills and plating techniques. The second element will be related to my knowledge of health and safety within a kitchen setting such as how I ensure safe practices with food and being aware of all 14 main allergens and avoiding cross contamination. The final written element will feature my knowledge of the relevant procedures for food operations.

Element 1

Throughout my placement in El Pescador's kitchen I was given a range of preparation tasks in both the pastry and starter sections. Whilst working on the starter section I was instructed to prepare two different types of croquettes. My role on the pastry section involved portioning the crema catalanas for the evening services. Once portioned I had to demonstrate the correct storage techniques ensuring all food items were correctly labeled with use by dates. Food labels are essential in professional kitchens as they are a prevention against the risk of foodborne illnesses (Kingston, p1 2023).



Developing my mis en place skills also allowed me to further develop my time management skills as the two are linked. Crous, Geyser and Geldenhuys (2016) highlights that it is commonly assumed that time management is critical when working with the pressures of a professional kitchen. By having the mis en place completed I can better manage my time when it comes to the service. I had an opportunity to further develop my mis en place skills when I portioned pots of roasted garlic for El Pescador's signature garlic bread dish, a popular and frequently ordered starter.

Throughout my placement so far I have been developing my knife skills within the kitchen, by practicing specialized cuts of food and preparing garnishes for dishes. Foskett et al (p9, 2019) highlights that knives are vital equipment for a kitchen as they come in unique styles to deal with a range of tasks. Effective communication improves performance and teamwork within hospitality (Siva Ram Sanker, Balamayuranathan 2024). Despite the language barrier between myself and the chefs I was working on the pass developing my skills plating and garnishing dishes. The presentation of food is important as how it looks can affect a customer's perception of flavour (Zellner, et al 2014). Working alongside the head chef I developed my skills working with poultry as I was making a duck wellington for a special Beaujolais day menu.

Element 2

Health and safety within a professional kitchen is one of the most important aspects to consider for multiple reasons, such as food safety and protecting the well-being of staff and customers. Due to the level of food served within the hospitality industry food safety is a vital element in kitchens (Rebouças et al, 2017). By adhering to the correct regulations, you minimize the risk of cross contamination, which reduces the likelihood of foodborne illnesses.

Food safety is also important when considering allergens, a priority within professional kitchens. Food allergies are regarded as a considerable food safety risk (Alves et al 2016). Therefore it is essential to be sufficiently trained in food safety. It is also vital to consider that many food allergies can be a danger to life. This is why in October 2021 the government introduced Natasha's Law. This law was put in place to protect consumers with allergies when buying food (Gov.UK, 2019). Food allergens can also be affected by cross contamination. It is important to prepare such foods in a separate area with separate equipment when possible, for example, using a purple-colored chopping board when preparing food for customers with allergies. Many of the chefs in El Pescador use the purple-colored board for regular food preparation and not allergen specific food items.

During my placement at El Pescador I witnessed a chef open a packet of raw chicken on the counter next to the freshly cooked French toast. This was an unsafe practice as the raw chicken could have splattered onto the French toast contaminating the cooked food, the toast then should have been discarded however it was still packaged and stored in the fridge. The consumption of contaminated food can lead to foodborne illnesses, commonly referred to as food poisoning (Shabir Ahmad, et al 2023, p2). Personally, I would have thrown the potentially contaminated food in the bin as it is unsafe for consumption. I would also ensure I am working with raw meat only in the raw meat section to avoid cross contamination.

Personal hygiene within kitchens is also vital as this once again reduces cross contamination risks as hands are perfect for harboring harmful bacteria. It is crucial that those preparing food in kitchen maintain a prominent level of personal hygiene (Ay, Dogan 2020). To keep this risk to a minimum I ensured I was consistent with hand washing. First upon entering the kitchen to begin my shift and then at regular intervals between my tasks.

During my placement I developed my knowledge of the importance of cleaning as I took part in a deep clean at the end of the working week. During this I deep cleaned the desserts fridge which was showing evident signs of bacteria growth. However, throughout my placement I became aware of the lack of cleaning supplies in the kitchen of El Pescador including a limited supply of cleaning cloths, most of which were soaked and unwashed. Moretro et al (2022) highlights cloths within a kitchen play a significant role in the upkeep of kitchen hygiene. This is why it is important to have a large supply of clean cloths for the kitchen as otherwise you may end up using dirty cloths full of bacteria and risking cross contamination.



Element 3

This element will discuss the organizational issues within El Pescador. During my placement I have found there is a lack of storage space for the prepared foods, with the fridges and freezers constantly overflowing. It is a well-established fact that keeping food stored at the correct temperature in the fridge and freezer is vital (Chandwani, Singh 2023). This is because the colder temperatures keep the food out of the danger zone between 8°C - 63°C therefore slowing down the rate of bacteria growth. As well as being overfilled I have found the freezers to be poorly organized, with different containers holding the same food items spread across multiple shelves. This in turn makes it difficult to easily locate what

you are searching for as I witnessed during a service. The chef working on the starters section was struggling to quickly identify the container he was looking for and had to empty half a freezer shelf before he found his required food.

During my shift on the 20th of November, I observed both the kitchen and outdoor freezers malfunction. Throughout the day all kitchen staff had been preparing the menu for Beaujolais day with many of the food items needing freezer storage space. This became an issue after it was revealed the outdoor freezer had stopped working entirely, meaning all the food still sufficiently frozen had to be moved to the already full kitchen freezer.

Unfortunately, El Pescador lost stock from the outdoor freezer as it had defrosted and was unable to be used. The best method of reducing food waste is to prevent the unnecessary amount of food prepared (Aamir, et al 2018). El Pescador seems to prepare a large quantity of food each week with much of it staying in the freezer until it gets thrown away at the end of its shelf life. Fortunately, the kitchen freezer malfunction was due to a tripped switch on the circuit board and was fixed before any more stock was lost.

During my placement I placed a request with the assistant manager to see El Pescador's Health and Safety book for their business. The assistant manager's response to my question was "we have accident forms, but I don't really know about anything else" he then prompted me to try asking the general manager who wasn't on shift that evening. Over the course of my placement there have been multiple occasions where the assistant manager has been inadequately equipped with the knowledge to answer the questions presented to him. This suggests a potential lack of training for management staff which can in turn affect the business as it could present a lack of professionalism. It is essential that managers have the necessary leadership training for their job role (AdminTHDM 2023).

The pastry chef within El Pescador frequently clashes with the front of house staff often disagreeing with their requests and refusing to speak with them. It is essential that staff can work together with effective communication between departments (Cousins, Weekes, 2020, p27). With the pastry chef unwilling to communicate with the front of house staff it creates a tension within the workplace, often leading the head chef to appear and attempt to diffuse this. Successful communication within the workplace is vital (Shinde, et al 2022). With the head chef pausing his job to calm down the disagreement service was slowed which impacted the front of house staff and customers.

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