

Understanding

I Believe In Deep Immersion

MY CLUB AND I SUPPORT THOSE WHO "GO DEEP."

The club and I support my Executive Chef Whitney Werner when he goes deep into his craft. He recently spent six weeks at the Culinary Institute, got beaten up by chef instructors, worked 14 hour days, suffered the tortures of the damned, all in pursuit of his Certified Master Chef designation.

Tough on him. Tough on the club 'cause we need him as Executive Chef. But I believe...

The club and I support my Assistant Manager and Youth Director who's digging deep into skydiving. We encourage her to take time off for specialty camps, time off to develop her skills, time off to administer a sport that needs talented administrators, time off to prepare for a two-week, "500-way" jump in Russia.

Tough on her. Tough on the Club 'cause we need her presence as Assistant Manager and Youth Director. But I believe...

The club and I support my Assistant Manager and Membership Secretary who "goes deep" into the arts. We encourage her to change her schedule, reduce her time at the club, spend three nights a week at the opera, take weeks off for lecture tours through Italy. Tough on her because she wants

to be deep in the action, the focal point, the Diva. Tough on us because she's The Thoughtful One and she's needed to clear away the confusion. But I believe...

The club and I support my Facility Supervisor who "goes deep" into the land of his birth for a month each year, back to Guatemala to his ranch, his family and his roots. Tough on him because he knows that the clubhouse is rotting away in his absence, and he cares. Tough on the club because the clubhouse is in the process of falling down while he's gone. But I believe...

The board and I support the membership as it "goes deep" into the principles that guide our culture and community. We put controversy on the front page of the newsletter, we put controversy front and center at committee meetings, and we fuel controversy at every turn with transparency because we believe that controversy forces a deeper look at core beliefs and practices. Painful stuff this "going deep." But we believe...

And the club supports me as I "go deep" into my teaching, preaching, writing and "wife-ing." They give me seven weeks of vacation each year to pursue Deep Immersion into the big issues of business and life. Tough on the club 'cause I'm gone, and when I'm gone they pay The Big Bucks to talent-



GREGG PATTERSON
GENERAL MANAGER
THE BEACH CLUB
SANTA MONICA, CA

ed lieutenants who "make it happen" in my absence. But they believe...

We as a community believe in Deep Immersion.

And I lead by example...

I BELIEVE

I believe in *the need* for Deep Immersion...for myself, for my team and for our club community.

I believe in team members who say they need to escape from the routine and the petty and go deep into their psyches, their craft, their passions or their personal life.

I believe my team when they tell me they need time away from The Club, to cleanse themselves of the petty and the frivolous and the inane, to focus, to restore, to absorb, to reflect, to grow, to determine if "what was right then" is still "what's right now."

I believe them when they tell me they'll return rejuvenated and refreshed and re-committed to the Beach Club

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Deep Immersion



WHITNEY WERNER
EXECUTIVE CHEF
THE BEACH CLUB
SANTA MONICA, CA

IT ALL STARTED AS A CASUAL CONVERSATION WITH MY GENERAL MANAGER, GREGG PATTERSON, REGARDING THE BEST WAY FOR ME TO STUDY, TEST AND GET HONEST EVALUATIONS OF MY COOKING ABILITY FOR A PERSONAL "SMART GOAL" THAT I HAVE...TO TAKE THE AMERICAN CULINARY FEDERATION'S MASTER CHEF EXAM.

Before I knew what hit me Gregg had figured out a way for me to take six weeks off to go to New York and The Culinary Institute of America (CIA) to take the "Pro Chef" level two immersion class and exam.

An option, recommended to me by Roland Henin, CMC, was the closest to my needs. It was year 10 for me at The Beach Club and Gregg has been behind my development 100 percent through the years but this was a biggie...I would wrap up all my operational loose ends and hand the operation to my sous chefs for nearly two months!

The Culinary Institute's Pro Chef Program

A Great Investment For Your Club!

I'm a 1984 CIA graduate and very excited to return. To think that nearly a quarter century later I'd have the opportunity to go back to study at my alma mater, the finest cooking school in the nation, if not the world, and pick the brains of top culinary professionals, was almost beyond belief. I'd leave family, friends and fellow employees behind for six weeks of "Deep Immersion."

THE EXAM

Day 1 – Baking: Having been the executive chef at The Beach Club for the past 10 years, having owned and operated Whitney's restaurant for five years and having taught at the Los Angeles Culinary Institute for two years, it marked more than 17 years since I last spent my day scaling, mixing and producing, without the help of anyone, multiple bakery items.

Each candidate had to produce 36 bread rolls of three different shapes; two piecrusts, 12 cream puffs unfilled, 12 éclairs filled and glazed and two sponge or pound cakes depending on the candidates draw. It sounds real doable in five hours. But cooking in an unfamiliar kitchen, ovens with German writing, different equipment and sleep deprivation all come into play sending the clock into fast-forward.

The baking critique is wrapped up and it's time to pick envelopes for Mediterranean day...fanned in front of me like a deck of cards. I pick last, either dreading the contents or being polite, which one I'm not sure. Camille Jackson draws Southern France and Michael Bowe draws Italy.

I take my envelope and open it...It's North Africa!

All I could think of was, "thank goodness I took the immersion classes," otherwise I would've been up late reading about brick pastry and collecting recipes like "Chicken Tagine" that are not part of my usual Mediterranean repertoire. This is not where you want to be for these exams...you need to be completely in the know so all focus is directed on execution.

We turn in our food orders for the next day and return to our hotel rooms to prepare for the next day's task not knowing who will return.

You see, a candidate is allowed to re-test up to two written exams but all practical exams must have a passing grade. The number of chefs standing may decrease as the test marches on.

Day 2 – Mediterranean: We're all excited to get into the kitchen and get cooking, when we're told that one of the chefs had "an emergency at home."

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family. I believe them when they say they're worth more "after" than they were "before" their Deep Immersion.

These pleas for time dramatize a simple truth – that life is measured by moments of Deep Immersion. Returning to graduate school. Starting a new job. Taking the Certified Master Chef exam. Kayaking for a week through the Michigan wilderness. Writing a book. Biking for a month through Southeast Asia. Debating an assessment. Losing a loved one. Moments of immersion are remembered. These moments help us grow, strengthen our commitments, defeat the demons that pursue us as we walk the floors, sign the checks, cook the food, draft the promos.

We, Deep Immersers believe that professionals should escape from The Job, frequently. We believe they should escape to The Other Side, where their passions lie crying for nourishment. We believe that professionals must find the time and the energy and the commitment and the confidence and the support network to pursue The Other Side sooner rather than later. 'Cause what we have and who we are will be gone before we know it...

THE NETWORK

Deep Immersion requires a lot of support from a lot of people who "put money where their mouth is." Deep Immersers

require a big, committed, enthusiastic support network that says, "we believe." Family who say "yes." Friends who say "yes." An employer who say "yes." Co-workers who say "yes." An ego that says "yes." A bank account that says "yes." Deep Immersers know – No support, no Deep.

Deep Immersion inspires guffaws from the cynical, the skeptical and the outright suspicious. The Support Network knows that there are lots of boondoggles out there disguised as Deep Immersion, "sabbaticals" that are nothing more than an excuse to escape, to play, to dissipate and to indulge. But Deep Immersers know that they need to show through their doing – and explain through their preaching and teaching – that Deep Immersion is good for self, family, club and community.

Deep Immersers need to appreciate that there's a lot of risk for The Support Network when Deep Immersers go deep. The Support Network knows that Deep Immersers could get the buzz for something else, and leave. They could get an inflated sense of their new self worth, and squeeze the club for more money. They could flounder while immersed and return to the club with a knapsack full of depression, worthless to themselves and to others. There's a lot of risk in supporting Deep Immersers, and The Network knows it. And they hesitate...

TAKE THE PLUNGE

Life is short. Each of needs to *identify* our Deep Passions sooner rather than later.

Each of us needs to *pursue* our Deep Passions sooner rather than later. We need to spend six weeks at the Culinary Institute of America. We need to attend jump camp for sky-diving. We need to travel with our family for a month through the southwest. We need to write the Great Novel. We need Deep Immersion – and our Network needs to support us when we go deep.

And for those of us Old Geekers who smell the end of The Club Adventure, we need to ready ourselves for the ultimate Deep Immersion – retirement. Some of us see a void, empty of the passions and the challenges and the glories, which are the club business, and we weep.

Others of us see 30 years filled with a Deep Immersion in pursuit of our own Deep Happiness, and we shout hallelujah. We aging professionals need to prepare for retirement by identifying our deep passions now, and practicing Deep Immersion daily, monthly and yearly.

We who smell the precipice need to be preachers, teachers and *doers* of Deep Immersion. We need to give others time and support to pursue their own deep happiness through continual Deep Immersions.

Life is short. Time is wasting. Go deep.

And enjoy the journey— **BR**

Gregg Patterson, a practitioner of The Deep Immersion, is general manager of The Beach Club of Santa Monica, CA, and a regular contributor to The BoardRoom magazine.

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INCORPORATED

The question in the back of all of our minds is: “Was he asked to leave?”

We finish two written exams, one fairly tough cost control and cuisines of the Mediterranean. It’s time for Mediterranean cooking and I’m ready. I roll through my menu with three dips, pita bread, carrot salad, chicken Tagine, couscous and the “brik pastry.” It’s a solid showing and I march on to the next day.

Day 3 – Healthy: It’s the same riveting experience with the healthy cuisine exam. I get lucky and draw flounder, a naturally low calorie protein, while Korean chef Jae Yun Lim, who’s been in America for six months, draws pork ten-



RISING PITA DOUGH AND MAKING POTATO BRIKS



CREATING THE BRIK PASTRY PRESENTATION



NORTH AFRICAN BRIK PASTRY

derloin. And although he is an accomplished chef having mastered his craft at The Seoul Hilton, he’s at a huge disadvantage with the language barrier.

I wouldn’t want to be in his shoes! The required amounts of vegetables and grains are large and must all fit into a delicious gourmet three course menu, including dessert for under 1200 calories. I create my menu; green gazpacho with tomato sorbet, sous vide poach citrus-herb flounder with oven roasted vegetables, edamame puree with an orange-soy reduction, polenta-banana soufflé with sour cherry compote and a cantaloupe shooter with goat cheese foam. I feel confident and end up with a solid tasting score but the kitchen judge, Chef David Kamen, tells me that in order to “make it out of this” I have to improve my kitchen organization. He has me running scared now and I think that was the point. It worked.

Day 4 – Garde Manger: I return the last day determined for a better kitchen score and turn out a passing platter, four dynamite-plated appetizers and six hors d’oeuvre. I draw a chicken, two pounds of pork shoulder and two pounds of shrimp. The chicken becomes a curried chicken galantine and the pork smoked and made into a teardrop terrine that ends up on the platter and appetizer plates. The shrimp is turned into bite size shrimp corn dogs! It’s a solid ending to a demanding week and an intense six weeks of study.

As ready to go home as I am missing family, friends and The Beach Club kitchen, I feel sorrow and anxiety...a kind of separation anxiety from my six-week world of cooking and craft. The end of my “Deep Immersion.”

THE PRO CHEF IMMERSION CLASSES

The classes that prepared me for the exam were everything I’d hoped for, including Power Points presentations full of pictures taken by CIA instructors while on tour of far off lands, with detailed descriptions of flavor profiles, the whys and hows the cuisines became that way, and enough practical class time to re-enforce each region’s techniques and flavor profile.

This was no easy feat though. I was in class from 7 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. five days a week and studying the rest of my waking hours, about 20 hours per day. The fact is, “The CIA’s Pro Chef Program is the best investment your club will ever make and definitely the best choice for your chef’s continuing education.”

I will return to take the PC III Immersion as soon as I can. It’s a culinary adventure of a lifetime so climb aboard and let the CIA take you away! **BR**

Whitney Werner, CEC Executive Chef, The Beach Club. He can be reached at: (310) 395-3254. Werner is president, ACFLA; president, Escoffier Society, president, Club Culinary President, Jr. Chefs Academy board member, CRA board member, Food Safety Ed. Network. For additional information visit: chefwhitney.com clubculinary.com jrcheffsacademy.com acfla.org