

York Institute culinary students help celebrity chef Robert Irvine

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Students from The Pennsylvania School of Culinary Arts at ...

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Five students from The Pennsylvania School of Culinary Arts at York Technical Institute assisted celebrity chef Robert Irvine during his live stage show at the Strand Capitol in York Saturday. The students spent hours prior to Irvine's performance prepping the stage and categorizing ingredients for the Food Network star.

"He has a sous-chef who travels with him and his sous-chef brought back ingredients from the farmer's market," Chef Timothy Harris explains. Harris, an instructor at YTI for five years, chose which students would assist Irvine, star of "Restaurant: Impossible."

"Then the students pulled those together to make it easier for him." They grouped proteins, grains, pasta, vegetables, etc.

"There was about 16 feet of banquet table covered with ingredients," Harris says, adding that Irvine used fresh, local products.

Irvine's performance on the road is described as a "theatrical culinary show" emceed by a computer-generated announcer who reveals various challenges for Irvine to tackle. The chef pulls in audience members to participate during the culinary quests.

"He was really great," Harris says. "We were there early. Students were pretty much finished setting up and he came in very casual. One of his stage personnel said something and you hear (Irvine) say, 'Students, line up at the table.' And he has this very commanding voice, very serious ... I thought, 'Oh, no.'"

"The students kind of shuffled to the table," Harris recalls. "But he was very down-to-earth with them. He went down the table and asked each one, 'Why do you want to become a chef?'"

Irvine had each student share his or her philosophy, who his or her mentors are and he discussed how food is a "style of life. We change people's lives around food."

"It was deep. It was great advice," Harris adds.

Students got to participate in a smaller, private demonstration prior to the show and got to sample a dish created by Irvine: seared sea scallop on a bed of wilted baby spinach with a side of julienne cucumber and red onion mix, with a dried cranberry-and-apple vinaigrette.

At some point during the day, students also got to meet "Unwrapped" host Marc Summers.

"The students had a great day," Harris says. "It was phenomenal."

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