

Student Employment at the FRidge



Each year, the FRidge hires high school students to help with food preparation and cooking before the start of the school day. Girls work one or more days per week between 6:20 and 8:20 a.m. It is an amazing on-campus job that provides students the opportunity to earn money, gain work experience for a resume and learn valuable culinary skills.

For inquiries about work in the FRidge, please contact Chef Ron by email at raskew@forestridge.org.

My Food Literacy Journey



Taylor Durham '11

As a graduated Forest Ridge “lifer,” I can honestly say that my job in the Forest Ridge kitchen has taught me as much as my experiences in the classroom. I joined the FRidge team looking for a convenient before-school job when I turned 16. At the time, I couldn’t have predicted how much the experience would change me.

I began by learning basic kitchen skills—how to safely use a knife to cut all manner of vegetables, how to handle food to keep it safe from contamination, how to flip an omelet with bravado at the Father-Daughter brunch. These lessons still serve me today, as I navigate any kitchen, recipe and food service job interview with ease.

Besides teaching me practical skills, working in the kitchen also brought me immense pride as a student. To see the fruits (and vegetables) of my labor served to my friends and teachers brought me the satisfaction of giving something back to my community. I benefitted from seeing my proactive prep work contribute to so many different meals. The onions I chopped in the morning became the base of that afternoon’s soups, a condiment for burgers, and flavor in a pasta salad. I was part of a team and something bigger than myself, a lesson often lost on teenagers in their first work experiences. For me, a world of possibilities bloomed in a kitchen where nothing went to waste. Old rolls became croutons, onion peels became soup stock, and leftover kimchi could be used in fried rice or even pancakes!

As my years in the FRidge continued, and my chopping speed increased, conversation became possible. Chef Ron taught me where the kitchen’s produce and meat came from and his philosophy on eating locally. His book and movie suggestions led me to Michael Pollan and documentaries critiquing agribusiness and the genetic modification of foods. Every evening, I brought home new words to look up. My vocabulary expanded to include “food deserts,” “Monsanto,” “mono-cropping” and “biodiversity.” Becoming food literate began to inform my learning in Biology class; next, my decisions at the supermarket; and later, my passion for health and nutrition that led me to study Kinesiology at Occidental College.

Since graduating from high school, my relationships with the FRidge Chefs have continued to bring me back to the Forest Ridge community whenever possible. I have helped Chef Ron with visits to local farmers, fishers and cheesemakers; seen his vision for a campus CSA drop-off and school garden become reality; and sat in on Chef Sasha Selden’s classroom lessons on probiotics. A particularly memorable adventure led me to a local Native American artist and storyteller, as we interrupted his work on a mural in South Seattle. Our conversation led me to the realization that the art of gardening and farming itself, although lost to many of my generation, isn’t even native to the Pacific Northwest—it was imported relatively recently by European settlers. Our current environmental crisis and fractured food system has its own characters and rich history that I continue to explore.

My experiences in the Forest Ridge kitchen planted seeds that grew into the passion for health and wellness I am pursuing today. I encourage anyone who eats three times a day to seek a job in the kitchen ... you never know where it might take you!