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Chef cooks up a career opportunity

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By [Beverley Morrison](#) »

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Teenagers dreaming of a career in the thriving restaurant industry are being offered a unique opportunity by Croydon-based chef patron Malcolm John.

The Michelin and Egon Ronay-rated restaurateur has two more apprenticeship places available on his Phoenix Initiative for young people aged between 16 and 18 years old. Those who successfully complete the three-month internship at any of his restaurants in Croydon, Sutton, Putney or Chiswick, could earn themselves a job.

"I'm looking for young people with drive, determination and a passion for food," said John.



Chef Malcolm John

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"I expect them to work hard, but in return they will learn everything about this business, from front of house to the kitchen." The Malcolm John Phoenix Initiative was set up by the chef in response to the August riots in Croydon. John wanted to change the public's perception of young people and show that most are decent and deserving of a chance.

"Not all young people are bad – we need to lose this negative perception of them," said John.

"I want to give them an opportunity to prove this. I won't say there won't be pitfalls – but if they work hard and have passion for the job, it should come easily to them."

John is committed to helping Croydon's young people forge a better future.

He is heavily involved in the community, as a governor at Trinity School, a board member of the Turnaround Centre, and an adviser on Mayor Boris Johnson's regeneration initiative for the town.

"I originally opened my restaurant Le Cassoulet in Croydon because I believed the people here deserved a good French restaurant," he explained.

"The town gets an unfair reputation, but it is a great place to live – it has good schools, good transport links, great shopping and great parks. "And Croydon is changing – there's a lot of investment happening here – and I believe it will be the place to be when we come out of this recession."

John is currently meeting staff at Carshalton and Croydon Colleges to discuss developing

his apprenticeships.

To date, he has identified three young people to participate in his Phoenix Initiative, but has two more places on offer.

Anyone interested in applying for one of the places, which could be at any of the chef's five restaurants in Croydon, Sutton, Putney and Chiswick, should send an email to his PA Phillipa at info@fishandgrill.co.uk saying why they think they should be selected.