

# Career profile

Name: Andrew Wong



## Master of his culinary art



love”.

The winner of the London 2009 Chinese Masterchef Competition, a boxer and a Wing Chun student, Andrew Wong is definitely a force to be reckoned with. He is a self-confessed bibliophile with a collection of over 3000 cookery books, a teacher, is passionate about perfection and, in his own words, “loves food that is cooked with

### What do you enjoy the most about your job?

The ultimate excitement is in creating a restaurant where you can see guests appreciating your hard work on a daily basis. Whether it is a new dish that you have been working on for the past few months, or just a particular design of breadboard that guests appreciate.

### How did you begin your career in hospitality?

After gaining two degrees I decided to enrol at a catering college. To learn a vocational skill with no real vision of where it would take me was a stab in the dark. However, once I turned up to my first class I never really looked back. The more I learnt, the more I wanted to learn, the more I researched and tried new things and the more I became obsessed with doing things well.

### What's your best career moment?

My best career moments are sporadic moments during the week when you look at guests and you can really see that they understand your endeavour. They get the reasons behind the small things you do in the restaurant. That is why I constantly drill the chefs to do the little things correctly and not to cut corners.

Besides this, it was winning the London Chinese Masterchef Competition, which was the first moment that I thought to myself “you're ok at this cooking thing, you may have some prospects in this industry”.

### If you could travel back in time would you choose a different career?

No, but I would have done it differently. I would have gone to Paris to work and spent more time in Hong Kong before settling in London.

**What's your dream job?**

I already have my dream job. It's how I dictate the future that determines whether it will be a dream or a nightmare.

**Who is your idol?**

Anyone who is passionate about what they do, whether it be chefs like Ferran Adrià, Heston, Ramsay, anthropologists like Levi Strauss, doctors that you see sometimes who genuinely care about their patients with a passion, or artists who absorb their whole lives into creating what they believe to be perfection.

**What's your favourite food?**

I love food that is cooked with love. This can be anything, but I will always have a soft spot for oriental food.

**What's the weirdest thing you have ever eaten?**

Chicken's feet, chicken's brain, sea cucumber, lamb's testicles, ballot, I won't go into the others.

**What did you want to do when you were in school?**

I didn't really know, I just knew that I wanted to be successful at whatever I did.

**Tell us an interesting fact about yourself**

We are currently working on a new restaurant, a new concept for Oriental cuisine that should open later this year in London SW1. I am more excited than anyone about the menu that we are putting together currently for it.

**Any unusual hobbies/talents?**

I have over 3000 cookery books. Boxing, Wing Chun, but cooking and eating is by far my biggest hobby. I can go days without sleeping properly, working on ways to improve dishes or problems in the restaurant (not necessarily a good thing).

**What's the secret to success?**

I don't know yet as I'm still aspiring for it! If I were to hazard a guess, I'm sure it would be something along the lines of 'work your nuts off, don't be complacent, surround yourself with passionate people, find a good lawyer and accountant and do what an old university professor once said prior to exam time – *"divide your time between working and praying"*.

**What advice would you give to other people who want to work in hospitality?**

If you want to be a chef because 'you like cooking at home' don't bother. If you think that you can learn everything in 6 months, you're dreaming. At the beginning, hours are long, pay is terrible, environment is hot, you will get burnt, but there is always a split second in the day when you stand still and say 'this really is actually quite fulfilling.'

**How does the immigration cap affect you and the Asian and Oriental cuisine industry?**

It has definitely affected us, it is worse for ethnic cuisines like ours. We end up having to compensate for a lack of passionate chefs by over-hiring chefs who are not passionate and trying our best to instil passion in them.

**Further information**

For further information on career opportunities in hospitality visit [www.hospitalityguild.co.uk](http://www.hospitalityguild.co.uk)