

Bio: Chef Jeremy 'Clark' Gilligan

I have always had a passion for cooking. Growing up at a time when the Food Network did not exist, I would rush home from school to watch Walk With Yan, James Barber the Urban Peasant and Pasquale's Kitchen. I was told by my Guidance Counselor in grade 12 that I would never make it in this industry if I was not fluent in French. Believing what he said, and French being my worst subject, I went on and took many management positions in several fields: Tim Hortons, Jiffy Lube, Hewlett Packard, Casino Niagara and Fallsview to name a few.

I was miserable at the Casino after being there for a decade and when I found out I was going to be a father, I left the casino and decided to follow my dream of cooking because my daughter needed to see me happy and not go to a 50 hour a week job that I could not stand. I tried to apply for the Second Career program and was denied for 3 years. Finally, getting my chance, I started at Fresco's Restaurant while attending Niagara College at 40 years old.

Niagara College was the turning point of my life, and I soon left Fresco's to cook at Benchmark for 4 years. I completed my 2-year course in 1 year and volunteered for everything possible, fully immersing myself in the cooks' life. Everything was coming together and then I was asked to become a member of Junior Culinary Team Canada.

While on the Team, I was practicing for 4 years, 12-18 hours a day, 5 days a week. My Team and I received a Gold and a Silver Medal at the 2014 Culinary World Cup in Luxembourg and at the 2016 Culinary Olympics in Erfurt Germany competing against 40 other countries. We are the only Team in 60 years of Canada sending teams to do so. During the 4 years with the Team I also became the Niagara Region Chili Champion 3 years in a row.

I have had the pleasure to work at Savoia Emporium, Bench Kitchen, Vineland Estates and Waupoos Winery. I opened and was the Executive Chef at Bricks & Barley and now recently became the Chef at The Urban Steakhouse in Fonthill.

8 years later, here I am returning to Benchmark for Les Marmitons, which is a very significant point in my life. As a student I used to help Chefs cook for you all and now I am the Chef. I have come full circle and could not be happier.

