

The Rising Star

The Rising Star Award recognises an up and coming star who will be a future leader in hospitality service. Working with a top panel of hoteliers, restaurateurs and hospitality experts we will select one of our Food Service Award category winners, who clearly demonstrate outstanding talent, aptitude and initiative in their role, and singles them out as THE one to watch.

The 2012 winner was Amelia Thornhill from The Cricketers, Hartley Wintney who spent five days at The Roof Gardens.

Day 1

Profoundly honoured to be here, I walk into Babylon at the Roof Gardens for the first day of my stage which formed part of the prize for winning the Young Rising Star of Hospitality Award with The Academy of Food and Wine Service and Virgin Limited Edition. I don't think I have ever been so nervous as I was greeted by the Receptionist, which was quickly followed by time with Peter Avis, the Restaurant Manager.

Peter was incredibly warm and welcoming as we toured through the property, and he swiftly reassured me. I was invited into his office as we went through my plans for the coming week. We went through all in fine details and Peter was flexible enough to give me the option to change any item and to tailor these for my current and future roles in the hospitality industry – I am currently deputy manager of the Michelin listed Cricketers in Hartley Wintney, Hampshire.

Peter and the General Manager Sam invited me for lunch - I ordered the salmon dish that was available that day; I normally take pictures of where I dine for my own reference, but the dish looked so tasty, that I completely forgot! I must add here that Babylon serves the best lattes. May I take this opportunity to say please do not be too hasty leaving after dessert – stay for a coffee, you'll be pleased you did, I highly recommend it!

Sam kindly gave me some advice towards my career that I am very thankful for. She gave me guidance towards being a better leader, management techniques and confidence that I will take with me through my service career.

My day then finished with a garden tour, a meeting with the sales team and Peter, and a body language training session with Megan (Head Receptionist). This session was very informative and a subject that sometimes gets overlooked, she taught and reaffirmed that my own body language at a table could be represented better advice I took away with me, and have used key elements of this to my own team.

Day 2

Feeling less nervous and eager to get started, I was assigned a day with Assistant Manager Luigi. I now stepped into a service. Luigi informed me of their planning for service. We went into a pre-briefing with the key members of staff that day. He also showed me the planning sheet that Babylon uses for their restaurant. It displays every small detail of information that staff may forget through service (such as the types of petit fours merely as an example). Key items from the briefing are placed in strategic locations, only viewable by the teams on duty, so to refresh through their respective service and specific to their roles.

The team is very close and I was invited to join them for their staff meal. They made me feel very welcome. It was a positive environment and they all enjoyed each other's company whilst dining.

As service started I shadowed the Head Waiter Flo. He showed me how their service runs, and all the small details that he must over look through the service. I found it very informative. My lunch was then split into two. I was then placed on the bar for further training.

Cocktails are not my strong point, but I had so much fun on this section. Elliot was my given trainer and he was extremely fervent at the same time as demonstrating the cocktails that needed to be made for that evenings VIP event. Elliot showed me a few different types and ranges of rum that Babylon had to offer. It opened my eyes to this spirit as this can be an area that is overlooked quite often in pubs.

After lunch service and my afternoon break, I met with Jess and we discussed The Roof Gardens Green Tea Project. I must admit that I am not as "green" as I should be, but her ideas of how they could make changes to The Roof Gardens and making it more environmental friendly were brilliant. We are very strict that The Cricketers in providing a better environment for our area (such as recycling, litter picking etc), and have recently applied to the Sustainable Restaurant Association and Hampshire Fayre as a symbol of our continual respect towards our customers and honesty that is required from our suppliers.

Day 3

I was met at the tube station today as Peter was taking me to Virgin Limited Editions Head Office. I was introduced to everyone and every department took the time to say hello and I found myself walking around each desk and shaking everyone's hand as they greeted me. It was a very welcoming atmosphere.

I then watched a video of the Virgin Limited Edition properties. This gave me the chance to see all their locations and learn a bit more of their brand.

I then met the Training Manager Sarah who gave me a company induction. We went through all of the Virgin Limited Edition Standards, and discussed the properties into better detail. I also was able to take home a few of the Virgin Limited Edition Ducks which are proudly on display in my room and are used as a daily reminder of this incredible experience and award!

Day 4

Today I was back at Babylon for my Friday split shift. I met with Peter in the morning and he discussed how my Friday would take place. My lunch was on reception, and dinner service I would be shadowing Catherine and Darius.

Lunch was my first ever service in heels! I am really not good in heels, but I maintained my posture trying to remember all that was taught with regards to body language throughout the service. At the start of this shift we discussed menus, table numbers and what was expected from my role. I wore my red lipstick with pride as I felt like one of the team. I love greeting guests, so I felt right at home on this section.

Friday dinner service was very busy. I took in the buzz of the restaurant, and shadowed Catherine for most of this service. Darius was reassuringly nearby whenever I had a question. Catherine showed me her role on the floor. She was tremendously ordered and was always a step ahead. A guest that evening was proposing marriage to his partner and she really made their experience special. She catered to their every requirement and made their evening a memorable one. It really was magnificent to see their happiness that she was able to provide.

Day 5

Day 5 and I had a telephone conversation with Lyn, who is Head of Human Resources. Our discussion was so inspiring towards my career. I asked her a series of questions and she gave me all positive answers. This was a perfect end to an amazing award, and an incredible opportunity to have a window into the day to day operations of Babylon.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all at The Academy of Food and Wine Services, the teams at Babylon and Virgin Limited Edition.