

SPOTLIGHT ON BRENDAN PRATT

HEAD CHEF,
VASSE FELIX, MARGARET RIVER



Described by The West Australian Good Food Guide as, "A chef auteur with just a touch of mad scientist in him," Brendan Pratt's creative experimentations with regional flavours, textures and cuisines and sheer drive have catapulted him from kitchen hand at a Fremantle golf course to raising the award-winning winery restaurant benchmark in Australia.

Brendan's chef accolades include Broadfield's 25 Best and Most Influential WA Chefs (2019), Finalist of Australian Chef of the Year (2013) and Young Chef of the Year (2009) and West Australian Apprentice of the Year (2007). He was a guest chef / judge on the television programmes MasterChef Australia (2013) and Seafood Escape with Andrew Ettingshausen (Channel 10).

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What do you do? Give us your BBQ pitch.

I lead the creative direction in the Vasse Felix kitchen, inspiring our team to discover and exhibit our state's most incredible local produce with our very own unique take on internationally-inspired fusion.

Did you always plan to work in this industry?

I'd got a music scholarship at my high school, but I was really into art and originally wanted to become an architect. Then, when I took a year off after my exams, working as a kitchen hand at the Royal Fremantle Golf Course, I got a much better idea of what I really wanted, and it certainly wasn't a desk job sitting at a computer! I wanted to be more hands-on with my creativity. I'd always loved being in the kitchen, and it just came naturally to me.

How did you get from golf course kitchen hand to Vasse Felix head chef?

During my gap year, I took on more and more hours in the golf course kitchen, picked up heaps of new skills and the owner said to me, "Look, you really should do an apprenticeship." He knew Chris Taylor, the part-owner and head chef at Frasers Restaurant in Kings Park, who's a renowned trainer and called in a favour to give me an interview. I got the apprenticeship and worked full-time hours in the restaurant while I studied one day a week at TAFE.

Long story short, I completed my apprenticeship a year early and after another amazing three years at Frasers, moving up through the ranks, I won WA Young Chef of the Year and was inspired by my peers competing at national level to head overseas and get some experience at London's Michelin starred The Fat Duck (No. 2 in the world at the time).

I landed my first head chef job at Frasers when I landed back in Perth. Then, when this job at the helm of Vasse Felix came up a few years later, a couple of guys I knew there said to me this is your job, you need to apply!

How would you describe yourself?

As well as creativity, I love teamwork. I was really into team sports as a kid. And it's really the same ball game in the kitchen. Everyone relies on each other to create one winning end-result. What do you love most about the industry? The comradery is amazing here in Western Australia. There's lots of support. We all band together, it's like a big state-wide community. And it's so good to be a part of that.

What's the best part of your job?

It's always been customer satisfaction. The reward I get from guests coming up to the pass and saying that's the best meal they've ever had, that's still hugely satisfying. Blows me away every time!

What's your best advice for anyone starting out?

Find an area that really sparks your passion and interests, and then find a place that really nurtures you. It won't feel like work because you'll be learning what you love.

And what's next for you?

I've always set myself big goals and my ultimate, maybe in the next five years, would be to own my own restaurant.

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