

TOP OF THE CLASS



When renowned pastry chef Claire Clark MBE set up her acclaimed patisserie academy at Milton Keynes College, she went straight to French brand de Buyer to ensure students would be learning with the best cookware, pastry and kitchen utensils around.

Since opening almost four years ago, the Claire Clark Academy has gained a reputation as the place to go for those wanting to be expertly schooled in the art of patisserie. From the outset, founder Claire Clark, MOGB (Meilleur Ouvrier de Grande-Bretagne) — whose list of former employers includes The Ritz, Claridge's and Intercontinental — made it her mission to ensure its state-of-the-art pastry kitchen would be equipped with the sort of light equipment and cookware items favoured by the most skilled chefs in the industry.

She had already used de Buyer's pastry equipment at Pretty Sweet, her high-end patisserie catering company, so it was a logical move to choose the French brand for the new pastry school. Putting the students at the heart of the Academy means that the management team always gives the best to their young learners, and the same goes for the tools they use.

"Everything at Claire Clark Academy is the best quality out there," she explains. "It's equipment that I use, and that the industry uses. I wanted the students to have the best, like in a professional kitchen.



Claire Clark and Andrea Ruff (right).

"De Buyer equipment is also hard-wearing, durable and long-lasting. Knowing that it is used every single day by students for now the fourth year, it is still in very good condition. It was also important for me that they have their own equipment so they can work efficiently, making a dessert from start to finish."

Clark insists the Academy has exceeded her and the team's expectations since its launch. "We've gone from strength to strength so much so that we have more students applying this year than we could have taken places for. We even had to hire an extra teacher



to support our team leader, Andrea Ruff, to accommodate the demand."

The involvement of leading industry pastry chefs for advanced subjects in the curriculum, such as sugar work, chocolate work and ice cream, is also highly instrumental in making the Academy stand out.

"As a student, when you have Benoit Blin from Le Manoir Aux Quat'Saisons or William Curley, expert in chocolate, as your teacher for the day, it is a dream come true. These workshops have been phenomenally successful and extremely beneficial for the learning of our students."

Indeed, evidence of the Academy's success lies in the prestigious establishments that graduates have begun their careers at. "The students have gone onto amazing jobs, with our top students joining highly reputable places," concludes Clark. **F&E**

WORKING WITH LEADING PASTRY CHEFS



On top of its close links to colleges and culinary institutions, de Buyer's R&D team and development chef work closely with leading pastry

chefs worldwide, including winners of the World Pastry Cup and the Meilleur Ouvrier de France (MOF), who help the French brand develop new and innovative utensils that are highly technical and brilliantly performing. De Buyer is the creator of the famous perforated pastry rings in collaboration with Valrhona School and has recently expanded its range with removable base moulds in round, rectangular and fluted shapes.

De Buyer is a French manufacturer of cookware, pastry and kitchen utensils and salt and pepper mills. For more information or to visit the showroom (in Kent), contact Signature FSE, representing de Buyer in the UK. Email info@signature-fse.com, call 01634 931055 or visit www.signature-fse.com