

# Alumni Spotlight featuring Kenzie Parkinson



Kenzie Parkinson, 20, of Jeannette, PA, attended Westmoreland County Community College from 2022-2024 and is our featured alumnus.

So what made Parkinson want to attend Westmoreland after high school?

"I was awarded the Presidential Scholarship, so it was very affordable for me to get my education while commuting from home and work. The culinary program was also well recommended and highly regarded," says Parkinson.

Westmoreland has one of the region's best culinary programs and has graduated some of the state's (and country's) top chefs, including one of our own alumni, Rich Rosendale, who holds the prestigious

title of Certified Master Chef.

At Westmoreland, Parkinson studied Culinary Arts. While some people take up studies in another county or another state, Parkinson has far exceeded this. She is currently furthering her studies in the south of France for Patisserie.

While looking back at her college days, Parkinson has a memory that sticks out the most.

"In my last semester at WCCC, I had a day of labs that started at 8 a.m. and went till 8-9 p.m. Between the two labs I had a 3-hour break. During the first half of that break I would study and do homework, but the second half I always, always reserved for myself. I would walk around campus for at least an hour (sometimes I would run) and practice my French with podcasts. It was truly my most cherished time," states Parkinson.

Did Parkinson have a favorite instructor?

Parkinson states, "Chef Schmucker is such a down to earth, respectful and hard-working person. He has a way of teaching the most high end cooking techniques, dishes and plating all with a rare, admirable humbleness."

Now that she has graduated from Westmoreland, what is she up to now?

"After graduating, I continued to work at the restaurant I had been at through my studies (J. Corks, Greensburg). When I was accepted into a French Patisserie and Culinary School, I decided to search for jobs in bakeries. Luckily, I found a place right in my hometown willing to teach me for a few months before I departed. Now, I am happily living and learning in a small town on the Mediterranean Sea," says Parkinson.

That is truly fantastic.

With that being said, how has Westmoreland prepared Parkinson for her current career?

She exclaims, "Having a solid background in culinary arts has definitely prepared me for this journey I am walking through now. Many of the people I am learning alongside have never set foot in a professional kitchen, and soon we will be moving into our planned internships. Whereas many of my fellow classmates are troubled over working in the industry, I have previous, first-hand experience in all of the terms and equipment we are using, and I have the confidence to carry myself professionally and help others."

Parkinson could not have done this alone. She gives credit to her parents and my dog (Fudge) who kept her going with much needed encouragement and hugs.

When she isn't in the kitchen, Parkinson enjoys singing, music, knitting, reading, Muay Thai, and eating soup.

Her advice to current college students?

"Don't trap yourself by thinking you've chosen a path and you can never do/be anything else. Go after what you want, even if you change your mind sometimes. All experiences are good experiences, but not every experience is a good one. Take everything you do as an opportunity to learn," says Parkinson.

She concludes with a quote from Oscar Wilde.

"We are not nouns, we are verbs. I am not a thing - an actor, a writer - I am a person who does things - I write, I act - and I never know what I am going to do next. I think you can be imprisoned if you think of yourself as a noun."