

Introducing

Nick Vivian Executive Chef, Hunter Valley Gardens

Nick began his career as an apprentice in South-East England and in 1985 was awarded 'Apprentice of the Year' whilst working in Durley Hall Hotel Bournemouth.

Upon completing his apprenticeship in 1988 Nick headed straight to London with aspirations of becoming a great Chef in one of the city's leading hotels.

Over the next five years his career went from strength to strength as he worked with some of Europe's leading chefs at the time, in fine establishments such as Hotel Britanica Intercontinental and the highly reputable Rue St Jacques, a one Michelin Star Restaurant where Nick was Chef De Partie under acclaimed chef and owner, Gunther Schlender. Gunther strived for total excellence in all cooking practices, and with the very high standards expected of a Michelin Star restaurant; Nick credits Gunther for having taught him never to accept second best!

In 1992 Nick migrated to Australia joining the Gazebo Hotel, Parramatta as Chef De Partie. The following year he joined the Hotel Inter-Continental Group and over the next 6 years worked his way up the ladder to eventually becoming Executive Sous Chef.

When asked what celebrities he has cooked for during his career, Nick is quick to cite the likes of former US President Bill Clinton, singing stars Whitney Houston and Luciano Pavarotti and well known actors, Sylvester Stallone and Mel Gibson, amongst others. He has also arranged a private dinner for Australia's former Prime Minister, John Howard.

In 1999 Nick accepted a position as Executive Sous Chef with Euro-Asia Hotel Rex and then moved on to become Executive Chef for the Marriott Hotel, Sydney and later Quay West Suites in Melbourne.

Following a wealth of commercial knowledge and backed by over 20 years hands-on experience, Nick Vivian is today the Executive Chef at the Roche Group owned Hunter Valley Gardens, one of Australia's premier tourist destinations, having joined this dynamic team in its infancy in April 2003.

At this time Nick is credited for establishing the award winning northern Italian influenced restaurant – Lazzarini's - which in 2004 won the prestigious *Restaurant and Catering Association* award for **Best New Restaurant**. Lazzarini's formed part of the greater Hunter Valley Gardens property along with Tallawanta Lodge, a modern conference centre, Harrigan's Irish Pub & Accommodation, Roche Wines, a boutique Shopping Village and the spectacular 60-acre international display Gardens.

With hands-on involvement in all these different businesses, it's no surprise that function catering is one of Nick's greatest strength. From 2005 to date, Hunter Valley Gardens has consistently won various catering awards namely: Best Hotel Catering (2005 and 2006), Best Wedding Caterer in a Function Centre (2007), Best Function Centre Caterer (2007) and Best Caterer of the Year (2007).

In January 2008 Nick's focus of the catering needs for the greater Hunter Valley Gardens entity changed due to the leasing of Tallawanta Lodge, including Lazzarini's, and all associated conference and event catering.

These changes have brought about a different focus for Nick's energies. With a revamped, energetic and enthusiastic team, this popular Hunter Valley chef will now concentrate heavily on reshaping the overall catering operations within the world-class Hunter Valley Gardens with particular focus on weddings and exclusive functions.

In addition, more of his immediate attention will be on building the profile of the three fashionable Harrigan's Irish Pubs which form part of the Roche Group (located across two states), as well as maintaining a prominent catering arrangement with the Hunter's leading concert venue – the trendy Tempus Two Winery and new function room “The Barrel Room”.