

SPOTLIGHT ON PAUL 'YODA' ISKOV

CHEF AND OWNER OF
FERVOR POP-UP DINING, BUSSELTON



Roaming chef Paul can probably claim to have cooked in more places than any other chef in WA. From the highly acclaimed kitchens of Amuse, Vue De Monde, D.O.M, COI, Pujol and Noma in his early career, to the incredible Fervor pop-up dining experience he's now taking into Wheatbelt wildflower country and Yallingup vineyards, into the treetops of Valley of the Giants and atop rocky outcrops like the Skywalk in Kalbarri National Park.

I was completely blown away on my first day at Amuse. The food changed regularly, so I was learning loads of new techniques really quickly and challenging myself every day!

Give us your bbq pitch. What do you do?

We are a roaming restaurant, creating regionally-inspired degustation menus in unique locations right across the state. But the real centrepiece of every dinner is the local native bushfood ingredients we collect through connecting with the traditional owners and the Country we are standing on. Wherever we can, we go out with the traditional owners to learn about their culture and heritage and forage for ingredients – like digging for honey ants with the Wangkatha ladies in Kalgoorlie. Whatever we find we'll cook in a respectful way and encourage our guests to discover more about local Indigenous culture and the incredible ingredients that have been important food sources for thousands of years.

Did you always plan to work in this industry?

Growing up, all I wanted to do was surf. And when I wasn't body boarding, I was hanging out with my dad in his workshop. Dad was a mechanic, a really well organised and methodical guy. Every tool had its place, every job had a process – there was a lot of repetition and precision work. Years later, I discovered that working in a professional kitchen was a lot like that, but back when I was in Year 10 I decided to get qualified in engineering and production.

So, how did you get into cheffing and hospitality?

The company I was doing my engineering apprenticeship with ran out of work and the owners very kindly gave me some work on their family farm in Yallingup. They then put me in touch with a restaurant in Dunsborough offering an apprenticeship, working late afternoons and evenings. That sounded great to me because it meant I could surf in the mornings and work later in the day!

I knew nothing about food. I could barely cook for myself. I learned quickly, especially when I moved to Dylan's in Albany, but it wasn't until the latter part of my apprenticeship at Watershed in Margaret River and my first job at Amuse that I really discovered my passion for cooking. I was completely blown away on my first day at Amuse. The food changed regularly, so I was learning loads of new techniques really quickly and challenging myself every day. I loved that!

How would you describe yourself?

I'm a pretty easy going and quiet kind of guy. I'm not one to shout and

yell when the pressure's on. Sure, things can get intense in the kitchen, but I'm always quite calm. I also like to think that I'm well organised. I got that from my dad, and all the incredible chefs I've worked with along the way.

What do you love most about the industry?

WA's so diverse in its landscapes and foodscapes. The Great Southern region, where I did most of my apprenticeship, is so different from the Kimberley. So there are many different experiences to be had right here in our state. And one thing that all regions have in common is a really supportive hospitality community.

What's the best part of your job?

Spending time on Country with the traditional owners, whether that's taking cultural tours, learning about caring for Country, or foraging for ingredients. We're not always able to do that in every single location, and sometimes there might be very little bushfood in season at the time of our visit, but those are the things I really look forward to.

What's your best advice for anyone starting out?

Reading cookbooks and trying out different cuisines at home will help you find out what you really enjoy, but the best advice would be to go and do some work experience at different restaurants. Even though you're working hard and long hours for no pay, it's invaluable experience and the best way to find out what kind of restaurant or kitchen you want to work in and what style of food you really love cooking.

And what's next for you?

Our goal is to open up a bricks and mortar place in the next five years to make the Fervor food experience more easily accessible for more people. We'll still be doing the degustation pop-ups once a month or so, but the restaurant will recreate that sense of place with a simpler menu of locally-sourced, seasonal native bushfoods and a strong focus on the traditional owners behind it.

Connect with Paul on LinkedIn

Link: www.linkedin.com/in/paul-iskov/

**WANT TO EXPLORE MORE?
HEAD TO WWW.THECAREERS.GUIDE**

Tourism
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Department of
Jobs, Tourism, Science
and Innovation
GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

FutureNow.