Culinary internships and courses

WARM UP

1 Ask and answer these questions in pairs.

1 Have you ever spent a summer in the restaurant trade or would you like to?
2 What was it like/What do you think it would be like?

The Stage: a Culinary Internship <<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<

A cinema ad for Spanish beer depicts trainee chefs at the famous El Bulli enjoying an idyllic summer, but what's working a stage really like? Have you ever spent a summer in the restaurant trade? Christian Puglisi, who worked a summer season at El Bulli's in 2006, says the film isn't a million miles away from his experience. Is the work of a stagiaire often repetitive and mundane? Of course, and there are hard times, but there are other kitchens which are much more difficult to be in. At El Bulli they are good at keeping things quick because they'll have 12 people doing something that's crazily repetitive for 50 minutes to an hour, rather than in old-school French kitchens where you'd have one guy doing it all day.

In general, you're thrown together with people when you're doing a stage somewhere in Europe, so you'll all finish together and drive home together, have a beer and a chat at the staff accommodation. Essentially, the film gives the feeling of what it's like to do a summer season somewhere whether it's El Bulli or a bar in Ibiza, it has a little bit of the same charm. Obviously there is a lot of hard work involved, but there is also a lot of time to socialise.

Throughout my late teens, every summer I worked as a waitress in a restaurant in a corporate hotel. The work was tiring and repetitive and the food uninspiring, but I made some good friends doing it, many of whom I still see. Working 12 hour shifts with people who share your pain is a bonding experience. In fact, I'd argue that restaurants and kitchens, with the work they demand and the camaraderie they inspire, particularly in the summer, are special in a way that other jobs just aren't. And that's what this film, despite its clearly romanticised recollection of a summer season, picks up on.

GLOSSARY

mundane *banale*
uninspiring *noioso*
bonding *che forma dei legami affettivi*
camaraderie *cameratismo*
picks up on *si riallaccia a*

ACTIVITIES

READING COMPREHENSION

2 Read the text and correct the information in the following sentences.

1 A cinema ad for French beer depicts trainee chefs at El Bulli restaurant enjoying an idyllic winter.
2 Christian Puglisi, who worked at El Bulli's in 2008, says the film is very different from her experience.
3 At El Bulli they are bad at keeping things quick, because they'll have 1 person doing something.
4 The film doesn't give the feeling of what it's like to do a summer season somewhere.
5 Obviously there isn't a lot of hard work involved, but there isn't a lot of time to socialise either.
6 Working 12 hour shifts with people who share your food is not a bonding experience.

LISTENING

3 20 Listen to somebody talking about a pastry internship and complete the sentences.

1 I was determined to find a kitchen where I could _____ under a master.
2 As an intern you may _____ some chef's whites, though at some places you may not.
3 If you don't already have equipment, then you will _____ it.
4 Be aware that it will _____ for your body to adjust to the physical demands of the job.
5 Remember that _____ you can spend in the kitchen the better.
6 If you are serious _____ an internship, you first need to do some research.
7 Normally, cooking schools have a special insurance policy that _____ in case of injuries on the job.
8 One of the best aspects of my internship was the experience _____ with my hands.

WRITING

4 Write an email to a restaurant in the UK or the USA, asking if you can do an internship with them for three months during your summer holidays. In your email you should:

- tell them the period you are available;
- talk about your qualifications and experience;
- explain what you would like to learn;
- ask what equipment you need to provide for yourself;
- ask about insurance and accommodation.

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