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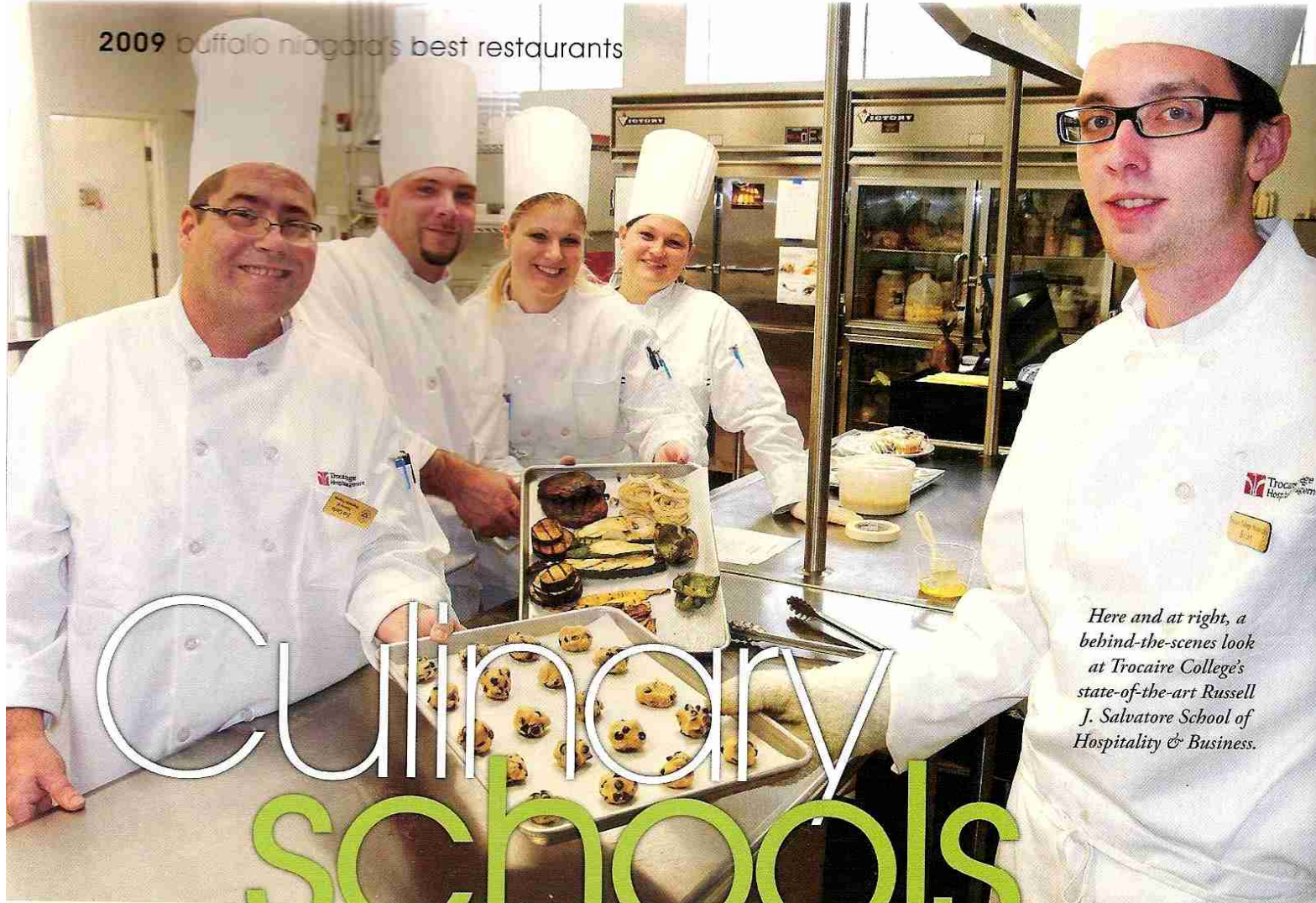
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Here and at right, a behind-the-scenes look at Trocaire College's state-of-the-art Russell J. Salvatore School of Hospitality & Business.

Culinary Schools

are flourishing in Western-New York

By Terri Parsell Hilmey

You might be pleasantly surprised to discover that our local culinary and hospitality management schools are turning out some of the best-trained chefs, kitchen staff, hotel and restaurant managers in the country — and the world. When it comes to fine cuisine, we've literally got the crème of the crop.

The hospitality industry itself is surprisingly enormous. Dr. Gary Praetzel, dean of the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Niagara University, says, "It is the world's largest industry, employing as much as 10 percent of the worldwide labor force." And the possibilities for growth are

also undeniable — as baby boomers retire, they're going to look for comfortable places to spend their retirement years, and eat well.

"While they want such day-to-day necessities as food preparation done by someone else," says Jim Carlo, hospitality program director of the new Russell J. Salvatore School of Hospitality & Business, "these retirees have already developed very sophisticated tastes. The institutional food preparation business has to respond by providing better executive chefs and a higher quality of meal preparation."

Training the youngest of our local talent, The Emerson Culinary High

School has been operating in various forms since the 1920s. This specialized high school not only trains in the culinary arts, it also ranks among the top four high schools in the city in terms of academics. A partnership with Wegmans provides a great catalyst for both learning and a vehicle for the student's future careers.

"We couldn't ask or dream for a better partner," says James Weimer, principal. "Wegmans accepts the students into their training program as early as their sophomore year. They work there in the after-school hours, they receive scholarship money toward their college education, and they often

return during college vacations to work at Wegmans. Many of them go on to full-time careers there.”

Emerson students also run a catering and restaurant business out of their storefront at 70 West Chippewa, providing them with both front-of-house and food preparation training.

On the college end of the culinary spectrum, one of the area’s newest facilities is Trocaire College’s brand-new, state-of-the-art Russell J. Salvatore School of Hospitality & Business, which offers three different associate degree programs. The new, more than 7,000-square-foot facility hosts “smart” classrooms and kitchens with video screens and wireless access, and a unique partnership with several of Russell Salvatore’s own thriving businesses on Transit Road, including the two new facilities under construction, Russell’s Steak, Chops & More, and a new 80-room, four-story hotel to be called Salvatore’s Grand Hotel. An impressive 94 percent of their students have either gone onto a career in the hospitality industry or have continued their education, pursuing a four-year degree elsewhere.

Erie Community College’s extremely popular program also offers degrees in culinary arts, and hotel and restaurant management, with a specialized certificate program in baking and pastry arts as well. “We’ve had so many applicants this year,” says Richard Mills, professor of Hospitality Management and Department Chair, “we’ve had to start up a new daytime program to run along with our nighttime program.”

While dealing with the art of food preparation, ECC manages to lay special emphasis on the business aspects. “Many of our students want to go on to run a business, so they have to be able

to do some fairly elaborate calculations and practice multi-disciplinary thinking to do that. They have to be able to take flour and water and eggs, and create a fabulous pastry, but they also need to be able to break down each of these costs, and then figure out how much to charge for each slice of that cake.”

The students get hands-on experience by running the Atrium Café and



the E.M. Statler Dining Room at the City Campus, and the Statler Erie Room at the North Campus, all of which are open to other students and to the general public.

Niagara University’s College of Hospitality and Tourism Management was the first in the country to offer a bachelor’s degree in tourism, and it’s where many students from other programs can continue their education. They are unique among area schools in their partnership with the 440 Five-Star Leading Hotels of the World. Students from their programs go all over

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the world to study and work at such fine hotels at the Villa d’Este on Lake Como in Italy. They also participate in transfer programs, either via their smart classrooms or actual travel abroad, with other students and teachers from around the world like Santiago, Chile and Cusco, Peru.

An exciting world awaits for local students who want to start their own businesses and make their homes here in Western New York. Or, if their ambitions are more global, they can find programs here that will send them all over the world.