



## ***Culinary arts in Tech-Voc education are turning passion into profit***

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There's something magical about the way a well-cooked meal can bring people together, spark enthusiasm, and even build an entire livelihood and business. In the Philippines, where food is more than just sustenance of daily survival but a part of culture and celebration. Culinary arts in Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET) are opening doors for aspiring chefs, bakers, and food entrepreneurs. Far from being a mere alternative, this track is transforming kitchen passion into sustainable profit. While some may still dismiss it as a fallback plan, the truth is that culinary TVET is helping Filipinos turn talent into tangible outcomes.

At the outset, challenges abound. Many culinary training centers lack modern commercial-grade kitchens, making it difficult for students to gain exposure to industry-standard equipment and techniques. Observers in Malaysia have found that inadequate tools can hinder skill acquisition and weaken confidence (Techanamurthy, 2015). In the Philippines, some regional programs also lack sufficient investments hindering growth and discouraging potential students (TESDA, 2018–2022). Despite this, enrollment in culinary programs is growing in response to a market demanding skilled workforce both local and international avenues. This expansion reflects not idle curiosity but genuine demand.

Yet overcoming these limitations sparks ingenuity. TESDA-supported culinary programs, especially in Bread and Pastry or Cookery NCII, consistently report high satisfaction rates among trainees and employers. A recent TESDA satisfaction survey found that 93% of tech-voc graduates rated their training good, noting that acquired competencies are useful in their work (TESDA, 2023). In Baguio, graduates of baking and pastry STEP programs received ovens and mixers that enabled them to start small businesses, giving a small step in the ladder (Dar, 2024). These successes show that even modest investments can transform practical skills into profitable endeavors.

In addition, the benefits of culinary TVET are not just personal but economic. TESDA data indicate that nearly nine out of ten tech-voc graduates find relevant employment or launch entrepreneurial ventures soon after finishing their programs (TESDA, 2023). Many join the hospitality and food service workforce, one of the country's fastest-growing employment sectors (TESDA, 2018–2022). Graduates from institutions like Bayan Academy have achieved monthly incomes in the tens of thousands of pesos—far exceeding the minimal training cost—and even secured overseas positions (Bayan Academy, 2016).

Crucially, culinary success stories are grounded in real-world application, not theoretical posturing. TESDA's Cookery NCII program is aligned with industry standards, and graduates enter kitchens or start food businesses confidently (TESDA RTC 02, 2023). Entrepreneurial initiatives are on the rise like bakery pop-ups, catering services, and specialty dessert shops are now common side hustles for culinary



alumni. Reddit testimonials from real Filipino learners highlight that practical, hands-on work helps them thrive where traditional college-bound peers stumble, proving adaptability and skill in unpredictable areas (“Has anyone tried,” 2024).

To critics who question whether culinary paths can sustain long-term success: these graduates prove that they really can. Yes, white-collar roles might still favor four-year degrees, but culinary create paths. They become kitchen managers, pastry shop owners, or even international chefs. The prestige conversation shifts when someone from a tool-kit-assisted bakery in Baguio earns more than many entry-level office employees.

In conclusion, culinary arts within TVET are empowering Filipinos to convert passion into profit. Overcoming challenges of infrastructure and perception, these programs deliver real-world impact. When students gain the tools, both literal and figurative, they don’t just cook—they build livelihoods, businesses, and jobs for others. Indeed, one can find the strongest argument rooted in return on investment, tangible achievements, and economic value. In a country seeking inclusive growth and meaningful opportunity, kitchen vocational training isn’t a fallback—its turning passion into profit.

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## ARTICLE DETAILS

TT-0000006; Received: June 14, 2025; Accepted: June 17, 2025; Published: June 19, 2025

## CITATION:

Manalo, Raymart. (2025). *Culinary arts in Tech-Voc education are turning passion into profit: Essays and Reviews*. DOI:

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