

Ciarán Keogh

Culinary Operations & Systems Consultant

I design systems that make exceptional kitchens easier to run.

Most operational failure sits in the gap between what a business needs and what its kitchens can actually deliver. My work closes that gap in both directions — making the requirement executable, and making the reality visible.

Chef and culinary operations leader with about 25 years across hospitality, from entry-level kitchen and front-of-house work into professional cooking and multi-site culinary leadership across Ireland, New Zealand and Canada. Experience spans high-volume production, premium events, private dining, performance nutrition, contract catering and chef-facing digital products. I turn fragmented knowledge and complicated workflows into systems that support financial control, compliance, consistency and employee confidence, drawing on earlier study in computer science and computer-aided design. Most recently, I progressed from Executive Chef at Victoria University of Wellington to Culinary Development Lead across stadium, university, school, corporate and tender work. Currently onboarded and beginning a yacht/private-service project.

Operating record

25	5,000+	1,500	1,500
years across hospitality overall — not chef-only tenure	daily covers under direct production responsibility at Victoria University of Wellington	peak covers per day in the Whistler Blackcomb resort operation	peak canapé service at NOSH, Wellington

The role brought two Star Awards in 2024 — Chef of the Year in June and a Performance Award in November — and promotion to Culinary Development Lead. Operational and financial data from these roles is the employer's and is not reproduced; the recognition is what can be stated. A signed reference confirming the Whistler results is available on request.

What I do

- **Culinary workflow and systems audits** — how work actually moves, where information breaks down, which complexity is avoidable
- **Production, regeneration and assembly design** — connecting central production to the people finishing and serving the food
- **Recipe-library and handover architecture** — turning inherited folders and personal knowledge into an organisational resource
- **SOP, training and knowledge systems** — standards that are easier to teach and follow than to ignore
- **Chef-facing product design** — translating culinary reality into requirements, interfaces and acceptance criteria
- **Custom systems shaped to one operation** — its equipment, standards, vocabulary and handover problem, not a template
- **Bid and mobilisation support** — RFP responses, operational mapping and contract scoping

Systems and software built

Two years of computer science at UCD and a subsequent BTEC qualification in CAD, architecture and building services sit behind this — the training predates the cooking career. I define the product, content, workflows and interface direction, and build working prototypes using modern and AI-assisted tools.

In role

- **Digital batch tracking and volume ordering** — linked seven halls of residence to central production, giving real-time stock visibility and more accurate forecasting.
- **Regeneration and assembly standards** — several hundred dishes reduced to five classes decided by browning and moisture behaviour, so method, vessel and finish follow without judgement at the pass.

Built on my own time, outside the scope of any job

- **The Spicy Noodle** — eight preserved builds from a working reference to a chef-first culinary system organised around find, build, learn and tools. Search-first, offline-capable and mobile.
- **Scorcher Bay** — a demonstrator mapping the path from food-product idea to operating business: costing, batches, shelf life, labels, compliance and planning in the order the decisions arrive.
- **Wholestep** — a music-learning prototype that evolved from a reference tool into a guided beginner learning system.
- **Maritime financial command centre** — a private scenario-planning tool for runway, contract assumptions, long-term allocation and recoverable records; only a sanitised description is published.

Working prototypes and documented case studies at ciaran-keogh.com

Experience

Culinary Development Lead · Compass Group PLC · Wellington 2024–26

National development role across Forsyth Barr Stadium; Massey University at Albany and Palmerston North; Victoria University of Wellington; schools and institutions; and Restaurant Associates corporate work in Wellington. At Massey, the remit included kitchens serving residents, external customers and other campus contracts, with substantial external catering at Palmerston North. Rolled the regeneration and assembly standards out across the sector and wrote the HACCP guide and SafeFoodPro forms behind it. Developed dishes for mass production at a separate 100,000-meals-per-day facility. For the UniLodge Canterbury tender, contributed to the culinary design for catering across three main sites and two satellite kitchens, designed the culinary offer and menu, and cooked the client presentation; involvement ended at tender stage. Contributed to multiple contract renewals through RFP responses and contract scoping.

Executive Chef · Compass Group PLC · Victoria University of Wellington 2023–24

7 halls of residence, three production kitchens, 5,000+ daily covers and 100+ staff across the operation. Built and implemented the digital batch tracking and volume ordering system linking the halls to central production, and designed the regeneration and assembly standards behind it. 2 Star Awards in 2024: Chef of the Year in June, Performance Award in November.

Head Chef · NOSH · Wellington 2022–23

Head chef for one of Wellington's premium catering operations, delivering across the city rather than from one kitchen: the Portrait Gallery, embassies, TSB Arena, corporate and private venues, from thirty covers to plated service for 350 covers and canapé service for 1,500 guests. Different equipment, layout and team every time. Highest available grade in the food safety audit within a month of starting.

Head Chef — opening team · IHF Health Club · Christchurch 2021–22

Opening-team head chef at The Crossing, Christchurch. Built the kitchen, menu and daily food offer around performance nutrition and member service, working directly with high-performance athletes including the Tactix netball squad. The club was later named 2022 Independent Facility of the Year.

Sous Chef · Emerson's Gastro Pub · Dunedin 2020–21

Sous chef in the brewery taproom operation in Dunedin: a smaller team and tighter modern gastropub format after four years of large event catering. Menu development, mentoring and repeatable quality under steady volume.

Senior Chef de Partie · Vbase (now Venues Ōtautahi) · Christchurch 2016–20

Vbase, now Venues Ōtautahi — the Christchurch City Council venue and event company, catering across the Town Hall, Horncastle Arena, Hagley Oval and Orangetheory Stadium. Ran my own functions. Plated dinners up to 1,350 guests, artist and VIP catering, satellite kitchens across multiple sites. Personal chef to international touring artists; elite sporting events including All Blacks tests.

Chef · Chop House · Dublin 2015–16

Christmas-period chef contract at The Chophouse, Dublin — a Michelin-recognised gastropub listed in the Michelin Eating Out in Pubs guide. Prep and service.

Line Cook → Lead Hand → Sous Chef · Whistler Blackcomb · British Columbia 2012–15

Employed by the resort and promoted each season: Line Cook, Lead Hand, then Sous Chef. Primarily at Dusty's Bar and BBQ — largest restaurant on the mountain, 550 seats, up to 1,500 covers/day at peak — alongside the resort's catering arm. In 2014/15 the team I helped lead produced the highest divisional results across guest, staff and financial measures at once, including a record 93 staff satisfaction score. Also part-time at Alta Bistro and the Whistler Brewhouse.

Chef de Partie · Avoca · Monkstown, Dublin 2011–12

Part of the 2011 opening team at Avoca Monkstown — the group's first food market — working in the seasonal, locally led café and restaurant food culture that became a defining Avoca format.

Commis Chef → Chef de Partie · Druids Glen Golf Club / Fairways Bistro · Wicklow, Ireland to 2011

Where I learned to cook. A five-star resort club that hosted four Irish Opens and the Seve Trophy — member dining, functions and the bistro. Classical fundamentals and the discipline behind everything since.

Kitchen porter → lounge boy, barman, cellar boy · Ireland from age 13

Pot wash and kitchen porter first, then front of house and cellar. Every level of a hospitality operation from the bottom of it — which is why I design systems for the people doing the work rather than the people describing it.

Qualifications

- NZQF Level 5 Diploma in Culinary Arts — ARA, Christchurch, 2019
Recognition of Prior Learning — assessed against existing professional practice. Among the first in New Zealand by that route.
- BTEC — CAD, Architecture & Building Services — Further education, Ireland, 2007–08
Qualification family confirmed as BTEC; exact level/title retained conservatively until the original certificate is recovered.
- Computer Science (two years, not completed) — University College Dublin, 2004–06
- Ships Cook Certificate — Maritime NZ, Wellington, 2026
- STCW Basic Safety Training — Vertical Horizons, Wellington, 2026
- Food & Hygiene Level 3 — Food Safe NZ, Auckland, 2026
- ENG 1 equivalent (unrestricted) — Onslow Road Medical, Wellington, 2026

References Named senior-management references and a signed Whistler Blackcomb reference available on request.