

Media Release

## Visa turns up the heat: \$30,000 scholarship fuels Kiwi culinary careers

**Wellington, 29 July** - Applications open today for the 2025 Visa New Zealand Hospitality Scholarship – a \$30,000 opportunity to accelerate the careers of emerging chefs, front-of-house stars and hospitality innovators across Aotearoa.

The scholarship includes a five-day international placement with flights and accommodation, access to a leading industry event, a year-long mentorship, personal brand coaching with a social media specialist, a wellbeing support package, and the opportunity to run an event at Visa Wellington On a Plate 2026.

Joshua Ross, the owner of [Twenty Eight in Lower Hutt](#) was the very first Scholarship recipient in 2023. Ross says the Scholarship helped redefine his path as a chef, and he's excited to see others step up.

"It was a dream to work in restaurants of that calibre – and it simply wouldn't have been possible without the Scholarship," Ross says. "It gave me access to new kitchens, new techniques, and equipment I'd never used before. When you're grinding through long days in the kitchen, opportunities like this feel out of reach – but this has really changed my career aspirations and opened my mind to new possibilities".

The former head chef at Bellamy's by Logan Brown, Ross, returns in 2025 as a judge of the Visa Scholarship program, fresh from placements at Saint Peter in Sydney and the three-Michelin-starred Moor Hall in the UK.

"My advice to anyone considering entering is to be ambitious and just go for it. Don't let imposter syndrome win. Working in international restaurants has given me a huge confidence boost, especially when I realised I could hold my own alongside some of the world's best. It's the experience of a lifetime."

Visa's Country Manager for New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, Anthony Watson, says the initiative is about backing talent with potential to lead the future of the industry.

"This is an investment in the next generation of hospitality leaders. With the support of local mentors and global opportunities, we're proud to be part of shaping what's next for New Zealand hospitality."

The Scholarship is part of Visa Wellington On a Plate and administered by the Wellington Culinary Events Trust. General Manager Penny de Borst says Ross's journey is a powerful example of what's possible.

"What Josh has achieved in just two years is remarkable. It shows what can happen when talent is given the right platform. Together with Visa, we're proud to offer this life-changing opportunity again in 2025."

Last year's recipient, Carolina Front, is currently working with a mentor to explore sustainable practices in winemaking and distilling – another sign of the Scholarship's growing impact across the broader hospitality ecosystem.

To find out more and apply, visit [www.visawoap.com/visa-nz-hospitality-scholarship](https://www.visawoap.com/visa-nz-hospitality-scholarship)

### About Visa Wellington a Plate

Visa Wellington On a Plate is one of the southern hemisphere's most significant and boldest food festivals. From burgers and cocktails to chef collaborations and immersive experiences, it showcases the best of the Wellington region's producers, venues, and creative talent.

Brought to you by the not-for-profit Wellington Culinary Events Trust, VWOAP is a festival dedicated to supporting and celebrating the capital's hospitality industry. Find out more [here](#).

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