

Alumni Spotlight

CUYAHOGA VALLEY CAREER CENTER

Eli Wolfenbarger

Class of 2024



Eli Wolfenbarger, a 2024 graduate of Brecksville-Broadview Heights High School, cultivated his culinary talents in CVCC's Hotels & Resorts Hospitality Program under the guidance of instructor April Moné. Today, he serves as a Culinary Specialist Submarines (CSS) in the U.S. Navy, working as part of a six-member team responsible for preparing meals for his crew.

After completing Boot Camp, Eli advanced his training at the McLaughlin Hall Food Services Training Center in Virginia, home to the Joint Culinary Center of Excellence. This elite facility not only trains military chefs but also hosts the prestigious Joint Culinary Training Exercise, a competition that sharpens the skills of culinary professionals across all service branches. His training was rigorous, covering food preparation, nutrition, dining service, and advanced cooking and baking techniques—an experience he likened to being on a cooking show. One of his first major challenges was a 75-question exam on culinary techniques and sanitation rules, much of which he was already familiar with thanks to his time at CVCC.



Eli's day-to-day duties range from planning menus and ordering supplies to ensuring food safety and, of course, cooking and baking for the crew. Precision and teamwork are crucial—every ingredient is carefully measured, and seasonings are meticulously adjusted to maintain consistency in each dish, demanding strong communication and keen attention to detail between the crew.

"I remember a day in class when Mrs. Moné had me remeasure ingredients repeatedly (pictured left). It was frustrating at the time, but now I'm so grateful—she taught me precision! It's true, practice makes perfect."

For Eli, the Navy offered more than just a career—it provided structure, purpose, and the opportunity to serve. When he realized he could combine his love for cooking with military life, he knew he had found his calling. Currently stationed in Connecticut, Eli continues to refine his culinary expertise while learning the basics of submarine operations, embracing every challenge with enthusiasm.



"I get to travel, cook, and serve people—it couldn't be more perfect for me." Mrs. Moné couldn't agree more: "When Eli told me what he was up to, I was like, 'That makes complete sense.' I'm so proud of him!"

Reflecting on his journey, Eli credits the program for equipping him with the professional skills and structured experience that made his transition into the Navy's kitchen seamless. While he had some cooking experience at home, CVCC prepared him for the fast-paced demands of a professional culinary environment. Way to go, Eli! CVCC is incredibly proud of you and looks forward to seeing all you accomplish.

Written By: Makayla Robertson, CVCC Media Specialist

