

IN MY VIEW

Changing and developing

FCSI Senior Associate **Jean-Michel Marbehant** is a consultant for ERM Project SPRL in Belgium. He tells Michael Jones about being inspired, every day

I specialise in professional and collective kitchen design. I've been in the restaurant sector for 25 years, developing various concepts for our customers. These tailor-made, case-by-case concepts allow them to achieve their objectives.

Eating is generally pleasurable for everyone. It is great my professional life revolves around happy people enjoying their food.

When I was little, I wanted to cook like my grandmother. She inspired me to enrol at the Namur Hotel School in Belgium and throw myself into hospitality.

Having had a career as a cook and restaurateur from 1995 to 2004, I wanted to head in another direction, but still acknowledge my passion for food. I decided to help a kitchen designer with the sale of kitchen equipment. I spoke the same language as my ex-fellow cooks so it was easy for me. Subsequently, after meeting my future partners, I wanted to go further by designing professional kitchens and places to eat. We created ERM Project in 2008.

Being a member of FCSI is a great opportunity. I still don't have all the knowledge necessary in my field. In life, you have to stay humble and keep learning. Being an FCSI-member consultant allows me to develop my knowledge, visit new concepts and communicate with fellow FCSI members. Speaking with other members on their experiences and concepts is enriching.

The way we eat – and eating out – has changed in recent years and in recent months. Habits are changing, the hours we usually eat are broadening, food offers are expanding, customer demand and speed of service is increasing. The sector must adapt to these changes.

Consultants must be even more professional and proactive. You have to be innovative to offer solutions and concepts that meet the needs and requirements of the sector. We must constantly develop our professional network. Consultants must go in search of information, we can no longer wait for the information to come to us. Now, with the coronavirus crisis, we certainly have to adapt.

I learned a lot from great chefs such as Pierre Wynants from Comme chez Soi in Brussels and Georges Blanc in Vonnas – and all my fellow cooks that I encountered during my years in the restaurant business. I continue to meet inspiring people every day. ■

“Consultants must go in search of information, we can no longer wait for the information to come to us”

