



***DID YOU KNOW?***  
***= 60 Seconds with Irena Chalmers =***

Here below: a 60 second interview with Irena Chalmers, author of the award-winning **FOOD JOBS: 150 Great JOBS for Culinary Students, Career Changers and FOOD Lovers** and its newest companion, ***Great Food Jobs 2: Ideas and Inspiration for Your Job Hunt.***

**Q: Your name is unique. What is the correct pronunciation of your name? What are the funniest pronunciations you've heard?**

**A:** My first name is Irena and is best pronounced E'rain'ah. But you would be amazed to know that others will call me Irene (Eye'reen!) or Irina (Eye'reen'ah?) or Ilona Chombers. As long as the person asks me nicely, I'm happy to respond with a smile.

**Q: How did the FOOD JOBS books come about?**

**A: FOOD JOBS and GREAT FOOD JOBS 2** and indeed, the *Food Jobs Book Blog*, are a natural extension from a number of conversations I had with various students over the years. Many were about to graduate from culinary school. When I asked what they wanted to do, rather than what they planned to do, some shook their heads in dismay and said, they didn't know. Such responses led to more probing questions on my part, and from there, a book and then another were born.

**Q: What was your first food job; how did you get started?**

**A:** I actually began my circuitous food journey at the Lexington Market in Baltimore. It was the home of the DelMarVA (Delaware, Maryland and Virginia) Chicken Festival. The festival's promoters hired a woman, sight unseen, to demonstrate the prize-winning fried chicken recipe. When she arrived there was no mistaking that she was absolutely gorgeous. The organizers were shocked. "Oh dear, this won't do at all," they declared. "What we need is an ordinary Mom." That's how I got the job. To this day I adore fried chicken.

**Q: What are three key pieces of advice you'd offer anyone about to embark on a culinary career or career change into the food world?**

**A:** First: do your homework. Making a life-altering decision is incredibly hard work (or should be)! Otherwise, if you leave this decision to the last minute, you'll have to grab anything that's offered because you need the money.

Second: be realistic. If you're thinking of opening a bed & breakfast or coffee bar, for example, learn the business thoroughly before setting out on your own.

Third involves the overused word: passion. Every successful person cares passionately about what they do.