

APPRENTICESHIP

Hospitality Training Academy, Making it Work During the Time of COVID-19

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Since the COVID-19 stay-at-home order went into effect on March 19, 2020, the impact on Southern California's travel, tourism and hospitality sector has been dramatic. [Los Angeles County's unemployment rate](#) neared a record-high 20% in April, with the [hospitality sector shedding 195,000 jobs](#) in one month alone. Those job losses were caused by shuttered hotels, restaurants, convention centers, universities, airport concessions and airline catering companies, stadiums and theme parks across the region.

The Hospitality Training Academy (HTA), which offers multiple hospitality and food service skills training programs, was forced to put all in-person training programs on hold. HTA had to find a different way to continue training and upscaling workers' skills.



HTA Apprentices watching demonstration during Fall 2019 class.

By the end of March 2020, HTA succeeded in developing an online learning platform offering over 45 different courses to participants covering a wide variety of culinary and specialized cooking techniques and skills, including disinfection, sanitation and safety procedures and guidelines for culinary and hospitality workers during the duration of the pandemic.

Assisting our expert chef instructors with these trainings, HTA also contracted with some apprentices to serve as instructor assistants on many of its online classes.

In addition, HTA and UNITE HERE Local 11 contacted participating employers about entering bids for public contracts to safely prepare food for vulnerable communities affected by COVID-19 for an initiative called "[Serving Our Community](#)" (SOC) program.

The SOC program addresses three urgent needs: it employs well-trained and experienced professionals who are out of work, ensures continuity of service at keystone employers and provides meals to at-risk populations, including homebound seniors, homeless individuals, low-income families and survivors of domestic violence, slavery and trafficking.

HTA was well positioned to leverage its longstanding relationships with keystone employers to meet the needs of three key stakeholder groups: the hospitality sector, hospitality professionals and vulnerable communities affected by the virus. Thanks to the efforts of UNITE HERE Local 11 workers and HTA apprentices, over [2.4 million meals](#) have been served in Los Angeles County to date.



Meals for HTA's SOC program being packaged for delivery.