

News

She gives up business course to COOK

Pioneer SIT graduate even met legendary chef Guy Savoy



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HER classmates went on to pursue business degrees, but Ngee Ann Polytechnic business studies graduate Lai Sook Yi decided to work on her hobby of baking instead.

So she went to work as a course coordinator at a cake decoration retail store and baking school, The Bake It Yourself Store (BIY), to get some idea of what it involved.

During her four-month stint at BIY three years ago, she attended a job fair and dropped by The Singapore Institute of Technology's career booth (SIT).

Today, Miss Lai is one of SIT's first graduating cohort.

The 23-year-old graduated with a Bachelor of Professional Studies in Culinary Arts Management from The Culinary Institute of America (CIA) offered through SIT.

"I discovered my interest in the culinary arts when I started baking and selling cakes as part of the entrepreneurship courses in poly," said Miss Lai.

The baking enthusiast joined 470 graduates at Resorts World Sentosa Convention Centre yesterday to receive degrees conferred from Newcastle University, DigiPen Institute of Technology, Technische Universität München, the University of Nevada, and CIA.

When SIT started in 2009, it partnered these universities, which offered industry-focused degrees programmes for polytechnic graduates.

Competitive

Miss Lai counts herself fortunate for being accepted at CIA as there are only 42 places at the school, based at Temasek Polytechnic's premises.

Said Miss Lai: "It's very competitive. You had to show that you've had some experience with food.

"I was totally self-taught. I didn't know how good or average I was, but thankfully, the selection committee must have seen something in me during the interview."



HAPPY: (Above) Miss Lai Sook Yi with her parents at her graduation ceremony and with Guy Savoy (top) at his titular restaurant last year.

TNP PICTURE: GAVIN FOO

One the highlights of the two-year degree programme was a 17-week internship at the renowned Guy Savoy restaurant at Marina Bay Sands.

Said Miss Lai: "I loved it. I encountered new ingredients not easily available in Singapore, like nasturtium, sunchoke and chervil root."

She also said she had met Guy Savoy while he was making his rounds, but did not get a chance to work with him.

Added Miss Lai: "When I joined CIA, my preference was making pastry and desserts. Now, it's hot kitchen cooking.

"I like to work with eggs because they are so versatile – they can be savoury or sweet," she said.

Miss Lai's parents, who were at the graduation ceremony, told The New Paper that they were supportive when she switched to a culinary arts course.

Said her mother, Madam Linda Lee, 56: "We're very proud of what she has achieved."

Miss Lai, who is looking for a job at an established restaurant, hopes to have her own snack bar one day.