SHATEC STRIKES GOLD AT TRADE EVENT OF THE YEAR

At possibly the largest hospitality trade industry event of the year, Food and Hotel Asia 2014 which returned in April, SHATEC picked up a gold and silver medal at the end of the four-day event. This year’s turnout saw a staggering 3,214 exhibitors and 63 international group pavilions alongside a slew of world-class competitions, workshops and seminars.

SHATEC’s gold medal at the event came from Chef Nicholas Yap of the Culinary Studies department in the Neptune’s Catch Fish/Seafood category. When the results were first made known, no one was more surprised about the win than Nicholas himself.

“The result is well-deserved because of the lengths everyone went through to make this happen. I’m immensely proud of the three of them, and especially when you take into account that they were competing alongside teams from the local hotels, I think they’ve done a remarkable job.”

– Ms Kellin Pang, trainer from the Food & Beverage department who was the overall trainer in charge of the SHATEC Team for the Dream Team Challenge competition.

In the Dream Team Challenge, SHATEC was represented by Muhammad Hazim from HCA 09-13A, Lee Soo Lim from DHM 05-13A and Mohammad Ilyas from DHM 05-13U. They were graded in the three aspects of Mise En Place, Lunch Service and Standard & Quality of Service and Food. In a nail-biting and highly competitive challenge, the team emerged with a silver medal and was ranked overall third in the standings.

In the culinary tag team category of Two to Tango, SHATEC was represented by Samuel Quan from HCA 05-13B & Hao Lin from DCS 05-13A, Alwyn Goh & Ang Hong Liang from DCS 05-13A and Toh Jun Ren & Martiraj from HCA 05-13A who unfortunately fell short owing to a lack of experience at high profile competitions. On the pastry side of things, Stephanie Rozaic from DPB 05-13B competed in the Desserts category and Louis Koh from DPB 05-13B in the Dress the Cake category. Their commendable efforts may not have won them a medal but definitely the praises of their mentor chefs.

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2-3 months and anticipate the fiercest kind of competition here,” says Chef Nicholas Yap.
At the 26th Singapore National Cocktail Competition which took place at Club DREAM (Clarke Quay) on 8th July 2014 this year, SHATEC notched a silver in the student cocktail category through Nasmeen from AFS 02-14A who impressed the judges with her robust performance and the consistency of her drink.

Presented by the Singapore Hotel Association and organised by the Association of Bartenders & Sommeliers Singapore (ABSS), this year’s edition of the competition saw more participants than last year vying for top honours in the 4 categories of Classic Cocktail, Flair Bartending Skills, Classic Mocktail and Speed Bottle Cap Opening, a testament to how much the bartending industry has flourished in recent years.

Alongside Nasmeen, who participated in the student cocktail category, was Ravin s/o Tirumal of DHM 05-13A and Qun Jie from AFS 09-13A. Their months of preparation and hard work showed as they enthralled the audience with their sizzling display of showmanship and cocktail-making flair.

We did not have as much time as we would have liked to prepare for the competition. Nonetheless, Nasmeen really came through for us and I think she may have inherited some of her dad’s genes who happened to be my classmate in the same bartending course a few years ago.

– Mr Jason Ow-Yong, trainer in-charge of training the students

During the conceptualising of ideas for the competition, Stephanie was willing to think out of the box and experiment with using different techniques. Not every student is willing to move beyond their comfort zone to innovate, which is one of the core values here at SHATEC. Overall, I would say that I’m pleased with her performance.

– pastry chef Pratheep, trainer in-charge of training and guiding Stephanie for the competition.

In appreciation of all students, staff and external partners who had in one way or another contributed to the competition efforts at Food & Hotel Asia 2014, SHATEC held a cocktail reception at SHATEC’s commercial restaurant on 20th May 2014. Ms Margaret Heng, Chief Executive for SHATEC, was there to grace the event in person and personally present certificates of appreciation to all participating students and our partners who had contributed to the success at Food & Hotel Asia 2014.

Our sincerest appreciation goes out to Mr Lens Gwee (Furama Riverfront), Mr Matthew Nonis (Les Amis Group), Mr Max Chong (Les Amis Group), Mr Ronnie Ho (F&B Managers’ Association), Mr Kung Teong Wah (Holiday Inn Singapore Atrium), Ms Molly (Landex Binlin Pte Ltd), Mr Lam Chi Mun (Diageo Bar Academy) and many more who have contributed to the success of SHATEC at this year’s Food and Hotel Asia. Here’s to more success at the next Food and Hotel Asia in 2016!
The team comprising Sherwin Khoo and Yong De Kai of DHM 09-13A and Jun Choe and Ezekiel Yeo of DHM 02-14U competed in this year’s Hotel Housekeeping Challenge 2014, jointly organised by Employment and Employability Institute (e2i), Association of Singapore Housekeepers and ITE College West, emerging first runners up.

Held on 23rd July 2014, the competition saw the participation of a total of 30 properties (hotels/service apartments) and 5 institutions. Since its inauguration in 2011, the first competition of its kind in the house-keeping industry continues to innovate by introducing two new components this year – glass cleaning and towel origami.

Despite being the quickest team of the hour and winning resounding cheers during the finishing touches of their routine, the team just barely missed out on finishing tops. Even so, the students remained upbeat as they revelled in the knowledge that they stretched their competitors to the limit.

Ms Eve Lee, chief trainer who helped prepare the students for the competition noted, “Considering how we only had a mere three weeks to prepare for the competition, I think the students have proven their mettle. They have constantly displayed a high level of commitment during training. In addition, the team also exhibited strong creative flair when they suggested going with the finishing touches of sprinkling flower petals at the end of their routine. I am very proud of them.”

Open to students and trainees from various institutions of higher learning who are not older than 22 years old in the year of competition, the 11th WorldSkills Singapore National Competition 2014 was held at ITE College West (for the culinary and restaurant skills component) this year from 10th to 12th July.

In the culinary skills category, Sim Zhi Ping Jean from HCA 09-13A made in into the final rounds and was pitted alongside competitors from ITE College West, Temasek Polytechnic and At-SunRice Global Chef Academy.

On the side of the restaurant skills category, Lua Mei Hua Monica from DHM 02-14U found herself battling for honours in the final six. Having recovered brilliantly from an unexpected turn of events during her service routine on day one, Monica noted, “The World Skills competition has provided me with a myriad opportunities and challenges. For example, skills such as latte art and table boxing were some of the new things I had to pick up as the competition went along. My heartfelt thanks goes out to Ms Kellin Pang (trainer) who spent countless hours coaching me in spite of having a baby on the way,”

It was my first time in such a competition and regardless of how much preparation you put in, you will still have to rely on your palate, techniques and gut feeling at times such as in the earlier rounds where I was confronted with the mystery box challenge.

– Ms Jean, student from class HCA 09-13A

The competition proved to be a real eye-opener for us where I personally got to see for myself the speed and skills of the industry professionals who competed in the separate hotel category. One thing that I’ve picked up during the course of preparing for the competition is the need to improvise and be flexible in different circumstances.

– Mr Sherwin, student from DHM 09-13A
SAMUEL EARNs A Spot At Prestigious Spanish Gastronomy Program

Congratulations to you, how do you feel right now as the sole Singaporean representative at the event?
S: It’s great and in fact overwhelming! I didn’t get my hopes up too high initially as I only learnt of it two weeks before Food and Hotel Asia 2014 (FHA) itself. I only had a deadline of three days before I was required to submit the recipes. To be honest, I had my hands full at that moment but I thought there was no harm in giving my best shot and see what came out of it.

How did you manage then?
S: It was not easy at all as the recipes had to comprise Spanish ingredients which were not readily available in Singapore. I had to spend nights at home reading up on Spanish culture and everything there’s to know about Spanish traditional cuisine.

Sounds interesting! Tell us more about their cuisine.
S: Well it turns out that tapas are staple food in Spanish cuisine. It is likened to ‘finger-food’, a type of appetizer or side-dish if you will. Many of these tapas can be combined to make a full meal as well. For me, I got my inspiration from their national dish and also incorporated popular ingredients such as iberico (cured ham), manchego (cheese) and gazpacho (tomato soup).

It sounds like you’ve certainly done your homework. How are the folks at home coming round to your achievement?
S: I’ve had mixed reactions. My dad is pushing me to go forth and claim this opportunity. It is indeed a golden opportunity to be able to be introduced to the place of origin of many professional culinary techniques, and of course not forgetting the enthralling beauty of the country. I couldn’t say the same for my mum, though understandably so, given the thought of her son travelling to a distant and foreign country is unsettling.

Thank you Samuel and we wish you the very best as you keep the Singapore flag flying high in Spain!
Earlier this year in March, SHATEC and Recipes welcomed celebrity comedian Kumar to our campus for the filming of an episode of a local channel 5 series entitled “Kumar Goes Back to School”. In every episode of the series, Kumar is faced with the challenge of picking up a different profession and acquiring its tricks of trade. On this particular episode, Kumar grapples with fine dining.

The filming took place over a period of 3 days at the SHATEC main campus as well as at Recipes. From napkin folding to dining etiquette, Kumar found himself stretched to the limit but not without help from some of his “friends” consisting of Tara Keisha Putri Panggabean (DHM 09-13U), Stephanie Tan (DHM 09-13U), Chang Kuang Sheng (DHM 09-13U), Ng Jing Yi, Sheryl (DHM 02-13A) and Ravin s/o Tirumal (DHM 05-13A).

“Kumar is such a people person with an enthralling personality which simply draws you in. Throughout the course of the show, his constant display of enthusiasm and eagerness to learn have impressed me the most.” said Mr Sahul Hameed, who played Kumar’s trainer on the show.

Our heartiest congratulations goes out to Miss Siti Nazeerah bte Gulam Husain and Muhammad Izzat bin Said who tied the knot in May this year! We’ve always been known as a premier hospitality institution but it seems that we can add matchmaking to that list of achievements too.

For these two lovebirds, it was none other than at SHATEC where their love story began almost a decade ago. It felt almost customary that they had to be back to film their pre-wedding video here where it all began for them. Both Siti and Izzat are our alumni with Siti graduating from Diploma in Hotel Management 05’ and Izzat from Diploma in Culinary Studies 05’.

SHATEC wishes the lovely couple a blissful marriage and many more good years to come!
The six acts that made the final of SHATEC’s Got Talent 2014 ran the gamut of performing arts - from dance to martial arts to more traditional singing acts. The show kicked off in style with some sizzling salsa moves from DHM 09-13A’s Chen Yi Fei and her partner Yong De Kai. Their energetic performance was followed up with the hilarious and curiously named Salty Fish, who were out to prove that they were not lazy students, which is what their moniker means in Chinese. Indeed, Aaron Hoang and Mou Yu Chun from DHM 09-13U shook their buttocks and belted out 80’s classics “More Than I Can Say” and “We are the World” to much acclaim from their vocal fan club support. A powerful and disciplined Wushu performance from Bryan Wong of AFS 02-14U astounded the audience next. Bryan even wielded a dangerous weapon during his performance to add to the excitement of the display. W & Zee, representing DTA 05-14A were up next with a soulful, controlled version of that Jay-Z and Alicia Keys classic, “Empire State of Mind”. The duo hit it out of the park with Loh Chee Wing’s totally genuine badboy rapping and Zulyqah bte Rashid’s luscious vocals, and the crowd showed their appreciation with howls of pleasure and rapturous applause. The high level of talent on show continued with a robust and rowdy B-Boy performance from Fresco Duo, made up of Nor Hadri bin Chuberi and Akira Akaoka from DCS 05-14A. Their slick moves and shear physical exertion belied these guys’ small statures and proved that size does not matter if you have the heart. Last but certainly not least was Shahid bin Abdul Rahman aka Didi from AFS 09-13A. This aspiring rock musician laid his soul bare with an unplugged version of Bon Jovi’s “Livin’ on a Prayer”. And even though he was ill, Didi showed his love for this classic 80’s track with a heartfelt rendition that certainly brought back good memories for this writer.

At the end of the night, it was very apparent that SHATEC’s students were multi-talented individuals with the ability and belief to bring them far. If nothing else, they showed extreme courage to stand up in front of an audience and six judges to perform and show what they are capable of. The big winners were W & Zee but, in the end, no one would deny that all the performers ended up winning that night and that indeed SHATEC’s Got Talent!
At one point in his life, Kenneth Tan faced a bleak future. He had fallen foul of the law and faced a spell in prison. He had hit rock bottom and was unsure about what life had in store for him.

Then he was thrown a lifeline. Kenneth got accepted into the WSQ Advanced Certificate in Culinary Skills conducted by SHATEC. This was the break he so badly needed. With the care and guidance provided by SHATEC’s trainers, Kenneth was soon on the road to learning a valuable skill. Not only was he feeling better about himself, he was soon feeling confident about his prospects in life. In fact, Kenneth turned out to be such a good student that he earned a place at upscale restaurant St. Pierre, part of celebrity chef Emmanuel Stroobant’s global group of restaurants of the same name.

Now, Kenneth is the Senior Sous Chef at the Exchange, an exciting new addition to Singapore’s culinary scene. He has also grown from strength to strength in his studies and experience, having won the WSQ Outstanding Alumni Award 2014. From trawling the depths, Kenneth, with the help of SHATEC and the Yellow Ribbon Project, has picked himself up and made a success of himself. A man who has grabbed the second chance of a lifetime by the horns!

SHATEC Alumnus Kenneth Tan wins WSQ Best Outstanding Award

The Second Chance of a Lifetime

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SHATEC Alumnus Yew Eng Tong Participating in Bocuse d’Or Competition in Lyon

From Singapore with Love

Chef Yew Eng Tong, an old-hand at culinary competitions, is once again in the thick of the action, representing Singapore in two upcoming international events – the Culinary World Championships in Luxembourg in November and the prestigious Bocuse d’Or competition in Lyon, France in January 2015.

The biennial Bocuse d’Or is contested by chefs from all over the world and Chef Yew is Singapore’s representative for a second time. Each country that qualifies is only allowed to send one representative.

Chef Yew, a SHATEC alumnus, qualified for the Bocuse d’Or after placing runner-up in the regional qualifiers, coming in second only to Japan’s representative. Chef Yew is also proud of the fact that his team were “completely home-grown” and fully trained by Singaporeans whereas other teams had engaged foreign chefs as trainers. Indeed, Chef Yew is proud of his local culinary upbringing and places utmost importance in the role experience plays in a young chef’s education. SHATEC Times had a chance to sit down with this dynamic and motivated chef to find out what makes him tick.

SHATEC Times (ST): You beat Japan and were champions in the previous Bocuse d’Or regional qualifiers in 2012. How did you find the competition in this year’s edition?

Chef Yew: This time round, I felt our competitors were stronger. I’m happier with this [year’s] first runner-up [position] than [being] champion[s] two years ago. Truth be told, I never thought of beating Japan, even the first time round. [In 2012], I felt that [Japan] were out of touch and not performing at their best. They brought in some unwanted preparation for the competition that day and I feel that they lost out because of that, rather than me outperforming them.

ST: You’re going with the National Culinary team to the World Championship in Luxembourg in a few months’ time. In terms of preparation, how is it coming along and what’s your mentality like going into that competition?

Chef Yew: I’m [taking the same] mentality that I [had] for [the] Bocuse d’Or to the Culinary World Championships. This is also taking into account that competing alongside my commis chef [assistant chef,

in the Bocuse d’Or] and competing alongside with the national team is entirely different. For the team, you have to contribute and most importantly everything has to come together. I have to ensure that I gel with my teammates. It is very different as compared to the Bocuse d’Or. In a team event, you have to compromise to blend in with the rest while not compromising quality at the same time. There are certain things you can control, and some you cannot when you have so many hands working at the same time. You also have to choose the right people for the job.

ST: Are you exploring new cooking methods for the competition? You were using a steamer instead of a sous vide machine to prepare the chicken roulade.

Chef Yew: For a student right now, I think they have to learn the basic fundamentals. Nowadays, there [is] a lot of modern technology that is “corrupting” their [culinary education]. It makes them [ignore] the basics like the oven. For school, it’s still imperative that they learn the basics and from there they learn. Then when they pick up the modern technology, [they] can fly.

ST: Do you have one final word of advice for our SHATEC students? Chef Yew: In this line, there’s no shortcut, especially for chef[s]. Even [if] one [has] a degree in culinary, [it does not matter]. If you do [not] have experience, how are you going to manage? If you get a degree, and you become an Executive Chef [straight] from school, do you think you’ll be able to “handle the [people in the kitchen]”? I think the “people will handle you” instead. As I always say, I want the young ones to learn whatever they can absorb, and whatever they can get [from my demo] and not think too much about how much they will earn during the process. When you get the skills and the knowledge, eventually the money will come to you.
SHATEC conducted its first Student Forum for 2014 on Wednesday, 7th May with the aim of getting the students’ views on existing facilities and the curriculum of their programmes. The forum was also a chance for the student body and the student council to share their thoughts and experiences with staff representatives.

A first for this forum was the opportunity for students to vote via SMS on issues related to school services, facilities and polices. At the session itself, the focus was on the Information Technology infrastructure of SHATEC as well as the students’ practicum training experience. The forum also witnessed several students articulately expressing their views and winning for themselves $40 in Recipes vouchers as best speakers for the evening. These students were Bhatla Priya Anil from DHM 09-13U, Nicholas Tee King Xiong from DHM 09-13U and Rosmantri bin Sudirman from DPB 02-14A.

At the end of discussions, it was decided that SHATEC’s IT infrastructure needed to be improved. The IT department revealed that the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore had been approached to extend their Wireless@SG service to within SHATEC’s compound and was awaiting their decision.

SHATEC’s students also voted on the effectiveness of their practicum experience and a majority of those polled agreed that they had benefitted. This was an endorsement of SHATEC’s continued aim of preparing talent for the local hospitality and culinary industries.

With the students’ voices heard and suggestions considered, SHATEC’s Student Forum 2014 was a success and a testament to how SHATEC is a caring organisation that values the feedback of all its stakeholders in making the SHATEC experience a rewarding and enjoyable one for all involved.

The balmy sea breeze and the crashing waves were the ideal backdrop to a morning of friendly rivalry between staff members and students as SHATEC held its second Intra School Handball Tournament on Saturday, 1st March. The venue was at the magnificent Uber Sports East Coast Parkway futsal pitches, offering idyllic views of sun, sand and sea. The competition on the pitch was far from idyllic though as seven student teams and one staff team pitted their physical prowess against one another to earn the title of SHATEC Handball Champions. Not only were bragging rights at stake, but also the top prize of $700 in shopping vouchers. Also up for grabs for the second and third place teams were vouchers valued at $350 and $210 respectively.

After a day of intense fun and games, the staff team came in a respectable third while the eventual champions, DHM 05-14U, fought out a tough and draining final with their DHM counterparts from DHM 02-14U. A tiring day indeed but at the end of it all, both students and staff members felt closer to one another having shared sweat and tears on the playing field!
SHATEC showcased the many WSQ programmes that we have to offer at Singapore’s annual Career and Education Fair 2014, which was held at the newly furnished Suntec City Convention and Exhibition Hall from 7th to 9th March. The programmes promoted were for both part-time and full-time courses, catering to a large segment of people including fresh graduates, individuals seeking further studies and working adults looking to upgrade or change careers. The Career and Education Fair is the largest education exhibition for both local and international universities as well as training institutions to connect with their potential customer base.

SHATEC’s chefs Lawrence Toon and Samson Lin played a pivotal role in Gulfood 2014 which was hosted in Dubai and welcomed tens of thousands of trade visitors representing a record 4500 companies from 120 countries. This year’s edition at the Dubai World Trade Centre was the largest and most internationally represented edition in the event’s history and served as a trade and sourcing platform that brought together world-class businesses looking to invest in bringing international flavours to a worldwide audience. Chefs Lawrence and Samson showcased highlights of Singapore cuisine in a pop-up cafe, the first time that such a facility was available at Gulfood. They served up mouth-watering dishes of laksa, chicken rice and chilli crab while also demonstrating the intricate skills necessary in preparing these dishes through live cooking demonstrations. Not only did our chefs display the wonderful tastes of Singapore to diners from all over the world, they also used products sourced exclusively from 48 Singapore food companies. Once again, SHATEC transcends the boundaries of our little red dot to fly Singapore’s flag proudly around the world.

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Training the Industry

Initiated by the Asia Travel Leaders Summit Working Group and supported by the Singapore Tourism Board and Workforce Development Agency (WDA), the SHATEC-DePaul Executive Development Programme (EDP) 2014 was launched in the first half of this year. The programme spans a total of 4 modules including “Sales & Marketing”, “Financial Acumen and Profit Maximisation” and is targeted at hospitality managers and executives.

The modules are facilitated by various professors of DePaul University which has been ranked 14 times by the U.S. News and World Report in the top 10 nationally for its part-time MBA programme in the Kellstadt Graduate School of Business. During the event, participants were put through a rigorous curriculum of case study analysis, development of strategies as well as situational application of knowledge and not forgetting, the wealth of invaluable experience which the facilitators generously shared.

At the end of each session, our industry partners who attended the workshop found themselves picking up little secrets of the trade and walking away satisfied from every fruitful session of the SHATEC-DePaul Executive Development Programme 2014.
INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENTS

18 MAR
KOREAN PASTRY DEMONSTRATION BY CHEF SANGJI KO

^ CHEF SANGJI KO IN ACTION
^ CHEF SANGJI KO GIVING HIS AUTOGRAPH FOR HIS COOKBOOK
^ STUDENTS ATTENDING THE DEMONSTRATION

18 MAR
SUGAR WORK DEMONSTRATION BY CHEF KENNY KONG AND CHEF BEN FROM RESORTS WORLD SENTOSA

^ CHEF BEN IN ACTION
^ SUGAR WORK BY CHEF BEN
^ CHEF KENNY GIVING AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDENTS

7 APR
INSPIRATIONAL TALK BY CHEF GISSUR GUDMUNDSSON, PRESIDENT OF WORLD ASSOCIATION OF CHEFS SOCIETIES

^ SHATEC STUDENTS WELCOMING BOTH CHEFS
^ GROUP PHOTO FROM LEFT: SHATEC STAFF MR NIWAZ, MR ALAN LOWE, MS MARGARET HENG WITH VISITORS CHEF JASPER, CHEF GISSUR AND CHEF ANDY CUTHBERT
^ CHEF GISSUR SHARING INSIGHTS OF THE CULINARY INDUSTRY WITH THE STUDENTS
INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENTS

23 APR
"THE GOLD STANDARD" QUALITY PRACTICE SHARING BY MR. LANCE NG, QUALITY MANAGER OF RITZ-CARLTON, MILLENIAS SINGAPORE

24 APR
CULINARY INDUSTRY SHARING BY DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AND CHAIRMAN OF WORLD CHEFS WITHOUT BORDERS (PART OF WORLD CHEFS ASSOCIATION)

^ CHEF WILLMENT LEONG (CHAIRMAN OF WORLD CHEFS WITHOUT BORDERS - PART OF WORLD CHEFS ASSOCIATION)

^ SHATEC ALUMNUS, CHEF TONY KHOO (EXECUTIVE CHEF OF MARINA MANDARIN HOTEL, SINGAPORE)

^ SHATEC ALUMNUS, CHEF LEONS TAN (CORPORATE + BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CHEF FOR THE GROUP OF SARINA CONNOISSEUR CAFE)

30 APR
MR MICHAEL TAN, DIRECTOR OF F&B (MICE AND HOTELS) FROM RESORTS WORLD SENTOSA GIVING INSIGHTS INTO THE INDUSTRY
SHATEC sits down with Saveur’s co-owners

SHATEC has produced many talented individuals that have excelled in the local hospitality scene and the latest alumni to join this illustrious list are Dylan Ong and Joshua Khoo. The masterminds behind acclaimed restaurants, Saveur and Concetto, started out in humble beginnings with a stall at Ali Baba Eating House in eastern Singapore. Now they are the proud parents of three restaurants serving French and Italian food at very reasonable prices. SHATEC Times sat down with these two young entrepreneurs to discover their journey to success.

SHATEC Times (ST): When did you become interested in cooking?

Dylan Ong (DO): We were influenced by food since we were young, especially me. My parents work[ed] in a kopitiam and I was exposed to the food and that’s when I started out. Initially, I did not think of being a chef and wanted to do something else but my grades weren’t that good. [I was] not the smartest in class but going back to knowing what we love and what we are good at subconsciously, which is food, [is] how we started out.

Joshua Khoo (JK): For myself, it’s the same. I was quite exposed to food as my mum used to be a hawker. Back then, besides [the appeal of] me working with her and supporting her, I suppose for guys if you can cook, you can attract girls. There’s also the common point that our grades weren’t that good. [I was] in engineering at NYP and I dropped out after 2 years and I knew that I couldn’t carry on. And I thought I [should] pick up a skill and in terms of skills, cooking [would] be a good option. Thus, I signed up to study at SHATEC.

ST: What inspired you to become entrepreneurs, to start your own business instead of becoming chefs in a restaurant?

JK: For myself, it’s very simple. We do goal-setting and understanding what our dream is about. [I asked myself], ‘Do I want to be in this line for long and working for people?’ It really is long hours and the final outcome for chefs is that they want to own their own

restaurants. I was asking myself how long [I would work for]? How far [would I go]? What was needed to work [my way] up the ladder? [At that time], I was a chef de partie. That’s when I [realised] that I needed to do something more than this so I went to Dylan and asked him. Dylan was still in the army back then. And that was when, through faith, we ventured out. [When Dylan completed his National Service], he didn’t have strong experience working and so with what I had and with what Dylan was able to contribute based on what he had learnt in school, we just came together and set off.

ST: Do you feel that the hospitality education you received at SHATEC was crucial in helping you set up and maintain your initial hawker stall business?

JK: Personally it was [crucial]. In order for us to [have a good] foundation, we needed to learn the [basics]. This is the part where the schools come in and give us the minimum [knowledge] of how things work and what to expect. The hours and the commitment. Somehow, it prepared us [and gave us] the right mentality before we went into the industry as trainee[s]. We do say that working experience is important but school is where we really have time to sit down and understand things through [learning] the theories. What the reasons are behind doing things. And this is what the school equips us with. It’s quite essential in terms of the growth [of a chef].

ST: How would you describe yourselves as students in SHATEC?

DO: When we were in SHATEC, we were not the best students, but we loved food. One thing we did was to challenge the teacher about the dishes. Sometimes, even before we stepped out into the outside world, we [thought] that we were like Gordon Ramsey already. When [our teachers] tasted our food [and made comments such as] ‘not salty enough’, we would say to them, “Why do you think it’s not salty enough?” Back then, we were just a bit too proud. We were not the best students, but thankfully, through the support of our teachers who were very nice and helped us through the journey, [we made it].

JK: We were pretty aggressive to a certain extent. We were not the best students people came across but, like Dylan also mentioned, we questioned a lot. And that is one of the reasons we really got to learn and this is the part where the instructors shared their deep knowledge with us. Because when you ask the right question, [it will lead to] other things as well so that’s when you really get to learn things from scratch.

ST: Any words of wisdom for SHATEC graduates?

JK: I think understanding the business is definitely [important]. [Being] good is one thing but you need to have the foundation and this is the part the school plays. To strengthen the student. [To get the most out of school, students] have to put in their heart and effort to really study. That’s one of the things I can really share.

DO: I [agree]. When you go to school, to excel in what you learn, [you have] to really put in hard work and really study [hard]. SHATEC equipped us with the foundation and, to a certain extent, it helped us with practical experience. All these little things matter and if you don’t take it seriously, you will get culture shock when you go for attachment. You wouldn’t know you have to work 16 hours a day. [So] pay attention in class [is my advice].