SHATEC IS STREET FOOD SMART

Singapore’s vibrant street food scene received its time in the sun at the Singapore Signature Food Challenge 2015, held in March 2015. This annual event showcased the best student chefs from 39 schools throughout Singapore, including SHATEC, the ITEs and Polytechnics.

Popular food writer and TV presenter KF Seetoh was a celebrity judge and waxed lyrical about the high standards achieved by the various schools in cooking up Singapore local delights. He exclaimed that it was “hard to believe” that student chefs under the age of 23 had prepared the dishes.

Among the local favourites created were iconic dishes such as Mee Siam, Cuttlefish Kangkong, Curry Fish Head and Fried Hokkien Mee.

SHATEC’s very own student chefs did us proud by achieving laudable 3rd runners-up placing at the event, proving that they could ‘wok’ it with skill and dexterity. They even managed to impress the judges with Singapore’s lesser known traditional dishes such as Eurasian Pork Vindaloo, which received high praise from the panel of discerning judges.

The panel of judges were impressed with the effort put in by the students to get their local dishes right. While many may lament the fading authentic street food culture in Singapore, SHATEC is honoured to have our students perform so well in the Singapore Signature Food Challenge 2015 for SK Seetoh, one of Singapore’s most recognisable food icon KF Seetoh to declare, “there is hope yet!”

WINNING IS A SWEET FEELING

Singapore Bakery & Confectionery Championship 2015

SHATEC flew our flag high and proud at the Singapore Bakery & Confectionery Championship 2015 where Khong Jia Ming from DPB 09-13-A clinched the title of Overall Champion in the Chocolate Showpiece category.

This prestigious competition is a highlight in Singapore’s culinary calendar where all the leading players in the world’s baking and confectionery industry come to witness the best talents in Singapore. Despite pitting against competitors from Singapore’s leading hotels and restaurants, Jia Ming’s brilliant display of his skills won him the much-coveted title.

The humble Jia Ming revealed that he was surprised with his win and attributed his success to his trainers and his schoolmates. “Chef Steven, Chef Yoke and Chef Pratheep groomed me personally and taught me a lot. Also, many students stayed back late (in school) to help me prepare for the competition. I believe that you reap what you sow. It’s all about hard work and having the right guidance,” said Jia Ming.
The high seas and high cuisine met when SHATEC collaborated with Steward’s Solution to manage a booth at the Extreme Sailing event held at the Promontory @ Marina Bay in February 2015.

SHATEC took the reins of the catering booth at the event and showcased the talents of our student chefs to a cosmopolitan audience. With Singapore’s famous cityscape providing the backdrop for the event, it was a perfect opportunity for SHATEC to showcase the exemplary culinary skills of our students to both a Singaporean and global audience. The event’s organisers expected a good crowd and SHATEC’s students were ready to impress.

And that they did. SHATEC trainer Chef Tommy Koo felt that our students’ culinary skills complemented the many “sponsors and [other] participating outlets [who came] together to showcase their products and services”. Trainer Chef Zavier Lee felt that the best lesson his students learnt from the event was teamwork.

Did you know that tea comes in a multitude of flavours and skilful pairings with food can create that perfectly delicious combination? Tea appreciation reached new heights at the recent Dilmah High Tea Challenge where SHATEC’s trainers bagged the silver prize for their knowledge and skill displayed in serving tea. Ms Sarah Thien and Ms Pearlin Chua were the shining duo that made SHATEC proud.

“Working in a team under pressure is not easy. I think the team learnt how to accommodate each other through this project.”
– Chef Zavier, SHATEC senior trainer

SCHOOL UPDATES

CATERING ON THE HIGH SEAS

Extreme Sailing Participation 2015

The RECIPES’ catering booth at Extreme Sailing
SHATEC Experience Day – 26 May 2015

Students and teachers from seven secondary schools were offered a rare glimpse into the world of hospitality when they visited SHATEC on 26 May for SHATEC’s second installment of Experience Day. The 137 students and 15 teachers had an opportunity to witness as well as to try out typical hospitality activities such as cake decorating, fine dining table setting, napkin folding and cooking in the modern and comfortable facilities of SHATEC’s campus in Bukit Batok.

The secondary school students were awed by the skills displayed by SHATEC’s trainers and went away from the experience feeling a little more knowledgeable about the hospitality industry.

“I thought napkin folding was very interesting. I didn’t know that you could make such beautiful designs with just a simple napkin!” professed Muhd Yuzaimi from Northview Secondary School.

Likewise, the trainers at SHATEC gained much satisfaction from sharing their knowledge and skills with the students.

I am always happy to expose the world of hospitality to the younger generation. I hope that today’s experience inspires some of the students to pursue a career in hospitality.

– Ms Eve Tan, Manager, Curricula & Standards, Hospitality and Business Studies

SHATECARE MOVEMENT FOR NEPAL EARTHQUAKE SURVIVORS

SHATECare Movement 17 June 2015

To do their part for the survivors of the Nepal Earthquake, SHATEC students rallied together and showed their caring side in the best way they know how – through food! Student chefs prepared a special menu on 17 June 2015, with delectable items such as beef sliders and nasi lemak. The event which was part of the SHATECare Movement was conceptualised and executed by SHATEC’s Production team and Student Council. SHATECare Movement for Nepal Earthquake Survivors received a resounding response from SHATEC’s students, who were eager to help out a good cause and receive a healthy and tasty lunch at the same time. A total of three thousand dollars was raised.
ENGAGING PARENTS AND STUDENTS THE SHATEC WAY

Family Day – 16 May 2015

SHATEC held its Family Day on 16 May, with a pleasant change this time round. While the usual agenda for these occasions consisted of parent-teacher meetings, SHATEC took the opportunity to get our students more involved. Aptly titled Parents’ Engagement Day, each class showcased an aspect of their learning by putting up a demonstration of their skills. There were attractive displays of food and pastries where parents were invited to feast on, a games booth to elicit the spirit of teamwork in families, a skilful demonstration of mocktail and cocktail mixing, a photo booth that captured memories of the day and nimble demonstrations of table-setting and napkin folding. Parents and family members had a sneak peek of the skills acquired by their children at SHATEC. To make things more interesting, attendees could vote for their favourite booth with prizes given to the three most popular booths.

Parents were impressed with the entire event, heaping praises on our students’ efforts. Assistant Director of Culinary Studies, Chef Steven Ong said that “several parents were so impressed with SHATEC and the event that they (couldn’t) stop thanking me and praising the school”. Some parents also mentioned that they noticed “how passionate (their children) are in their craft and chosen profession” and, after “seeing how hard their trainers and everyone from SHATEC” worked to make Parents’ Engagement Day 2015 a success, they could understand why. A resounding testimony indeed to the commitment and dedication of our SHATEC family.

RELOCATION OF SHATEC’S RESTAURANT

“Recipes” restaurant located at The Treasury Building, ceased operations on 18 September 2015 after 17 years. A new training restaurant, “The Sapling”, meaningfully named to highlight how its students grow and blossom under the nurturing environment provided by SHATEC, will be opened. The Sapling opened on 2 November 2015. It is located at 20 Lengkok Bahru.

Contact us at:
Email: reservations@thesapling.sg
Tel: (65) 6472 0933

Group photo of students and Director, Academic & Development, Ms Chua Siew Beng

Parents enjoying themselves at the family day
On 31 July 2015, the Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel bore witness to the launch of the Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC, another defining moment in the long history of SHATEC, the training arm of the Singapore Hotel Association and Singapore’s pioneering hospitality training institution.

This innovative initiative is the first of its kind to be launched in an industry school and seeks to pair experienced and accomplished professionals from the tourism and hospitality industry as mentors to SHATEC students in order to provide them with guidance in their fledgling careers.

Currently, 23 mentees from the three faculties in SHATEC - Hospitality and Business Studies, Food and Beverage Studies and Culinary and Pastry Studies - are enrolled in this programme. They have all been connected with mentors who possess the background and expertise that commensurate with the mentees’ interests and career goals. Through the programme, the mentees are given opportunities to enhance their employability skills, increase their industry awareness and gain firsthand insights into the workings of Singapore’s hospitality industry.

The Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC is structured over a year with the expectations and roles of both mentors and mentees clearly defined and made known to them. This allows the existing 40 mentors, ranging from Executive Directors to General Managers to Heads of Departments, to plan their engagement with their mentees in an efficient and constructive manner.

Overseeing the entire programme is an Advisory Council chaired by Mrs Tan Wee Wei Ling, Executive Director of Asset Management of Pan Pacific Hotels Group and co-chaired by Mrs Diana Ee-Tan, Director of Far East Orchard Limited. The Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC includes mentors from five sectors of the hospitality industry and is administered by SHATEC, which is the secretariat. The organisation of the programme is illustrated in the chart below:

**Advisory Council**
- Hotel Operations Mentor Panel
- Food & Beverage Mentor Panel
- Tourism Mentor Panel
- Pastry & Culinary Mentor Panel
- Sales Distribution & Marketing Mentor Panel

**Secretariat - SHATEC**

― more Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC on page 6
Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC
continued from previous page...

The Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC serves to add value to the education of hospitality students in Singapore and enable them to be adequately equipped with sound advice to help them in their learning. With the support of leaders from the industry, it is hoped that the launch of this programme will influence the next generation of leaders in the hospitality industry. In the words of Mrs Tan, “as experienced hoteliers, we can make a difference”.

^ THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE INDUSTRY MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME @ SHATEC
^ Q&A PANEL DISCUSSION WITH MENTORS
^ FROM LEFT: MRS DIANA EE-TAN (VICE-CHAIRMAN, SHATEC), MRS TAN WEE WEI LING (BOARD OF DIRECTOR, SHATEC) AND MS MARGARET HENG (CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SHATEC)
^ FROM LEFT: MS CHUA SIEW BENG (DIRECTOR, ACADEMIC & DEVELOPMENT), MS SOOK YEAN (SENIOR DIRECTOR, MEMBERSHIP & INDUSTRY SERVICES, SHA) AND MS JULIANA SOH (DIRECTOR, DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE)
^ FROM LEFT: MR ALBERT TEO (CEO, AMARA HOLDINGS LIMITED), MR EDMUND TOH (DIRECTOR, CULINARY STUDIES, SHATEC) AND MR ERIC TEO (CELEBRITY CHEF/FOUNDER, ET CULINARY ARTS)
^ THUMBS UP FROM THE MENTEES AND MS EVE LEE, MANAGER, CURRICULA & STANDARDS, SHATEC
^ MENTEES

The Official Launch of the Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC

Launch of the Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC

Friday, 31 Jan 2013
Having worked his way through the ranks to become the Hotel Manager at Grand Hyatt Singapore, Swiss-born Olivier Lenoir, a mentor in the Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC, is a firm believer that a little elbow grease goes a long way. Olivier learnt the tools of his trade through an apprenticeship programme in Switzerland where he worked as a chef in a hotel for four days a week and attended lessons in school once a week. He believes that this route was instrumental in his path to the top and was very excited to be a part of the Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC. He believes that mentoring “adds the professional aspect of [working] life into the academic part of life” for students in Singapore where apprenticeship programmes are a thing of the past.

Olivier likes to work closely with those whom he mentors. He strongly encourages his mentees to explore all the aspects of a hotel through him. “We have 800 employees at the (Grand Hyatt) hotel, so if you “touch” me, you “touch” all of the hotels automatically,” Olivier says. True to his word, Olivier has already opened doors for Maxmillian Lim, the mentee he was paired up with.

“Max has been in touch with our Director of Security, for example, so I think the Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC is great not only for the experience of the mentor but also what the mentor can bring to the table [in terms of his] connections and network.”

– Olivier Lenoir, a mentor in the Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC

“... And this is where the Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC can help give mentees “more realistic expectations” of the industry and improve their chances of doing well.

Besides forging valuable connections, Olivier also feels that the Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC is a great tool to inspire Generation Y students to see hospitality as a career and not just another job. Olivier believes that the programme will prepare mentees by providing them with a “strong base that will allow [them] to grow [their] careers” and to be a success in the hospitality industry.”

Olivier cites the expectations of Generation Y as one of the biggest challenges facing the industry today. The long hours, the demands of guests and the forgone weekends take a toll on people who are new to the industry, says Olivier.

The access to different segments of a hotel is what Olivier’s mentee Maxmillian is most grateful for. Since he has joined the Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC, Maxmillian has been able to see the varying perspectives of a hotel’s management team. He is able to see the bigger picture of how a hotel is managed. Maxmillian has also a new-found confidence in approaching senior management for advice on how to deal with different challenges and issues.

With its selection of mentors who are not only experienced but also eager to guide and advise young aspirants in the industry, the Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC certainly “fills the gap”, as Olivier Lenoir says, between the industry and school. And, as Olivier also points out, this can help to fast track one’s career in hospitality and allow them to become a success in a tough but rewarding sector.
The biggest change that Mandarin Oriental Singapore’s Executive Chef Toni Robertson has noticed in Singapore’s hotel culinary scene since she last worked here in the late 1990s is the presence of more local talent in top positions. “[During my] first time [in Singapore], all the Executive Chefs and Sous Chefs were expats. I am so happy to see [that] the [local] cooks [I worked with 16 years ago] are now Executive Chefs or Food and Beverage Managers,” says Chef Toni. “Supporting the next generation” to achieve this progress is very important to Chef Toni, a key reason why she felt “honoured and privileged” when asked to be a mentor in the Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC.

Chef Toni is also encouraged to “see a lot more doors opened” to women chefs in the local industry today. Before, she noticed that women chefs were placed mainly in the ‘pastry’ or ‘cold’ kitchens but now she sees many more in her ‘hot’ kitchen, giving the men a run for their money.

One challenge that Chef Toni feels is pertinent to new comers to the culinary industry is the sheer level of competition they face. With the popularity of celebrity chefs and a “glorifying” of what it means to be a chef, she feels that more people are coming into the industry with high hopes and unrealistic dreams. One way that new entrants into the culinary industry can endure and make a name for themselves is to “know what the industry is all about,” says Chef Toni.

That is where an initiative like the Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC is important in a student’s development as a hospitality professional. However, while a mentor can provide “a direction” for his or her mentee, it is important that mentees have an ambition they want to fulfil for themselves. “We can nurture them, coach them [but they need to tell me] ‘This is what I want to know… I want to know about this’,” says Chef Toni.

It is precisely this single-mindedness that impressed Chef Toni about her mentee Syahir Osman. “He’s a go-getter,” she says about Syahir. “When I met him, he already looked like he had a goal, he had a structure. I can see that he’s going to go far.”

A goal is exactly what Syahir has. He aspires to be a Chef de Cuisine and he feels that Chef Toni is the perfect mentor to help him achieve that aspiration. “I think she can give me a better insight into the industry and what my career progression can be like,” Syahir shares. As for Chef Toni, she is happy to be involved in the Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC for the “satisfaction” it gives her in guiding talents like Syahir in their quest to carve out a promising career in the culinary industry.

For the seasoned mentor who jokes that she can get a free meal from her former mentees in almost every restaurant in Singapore, the Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC is a welcome addition to hospitality education in Singapore. In fact, she is delighted with the programme because “this is the first mentorship programme that is very properly structured”. She is impressed with the detailed consultations SHATEC had with the mentors before implementation and how all the expectations of the mentors were communicated to them clearly beforehand. “There was even a contract that we (mentors) signed.”

The mentees also have their obligations clearly spelt out to them upon joining the Industry Mentorship Programme @ SHATEC. There are timelines for duties that mentees have to fulfil as well as boundaries that they have to adhere to while in the one-year long programme. This gives both parties the confidence that the entire experience will be a rewarding one.
Cocktail culture is on the rise. Unique expressions of classic concoctions as well as new and exotic creations have given rise to a virtual flood of tipples to suit each and every palate. Such is the diversity out there, that more often than not, the regular bartender finds him or herself somewhat overwhelmed. We, in this discourse, will attempt to make some sense of it all.

It helps to know what you want. Because if you are, like myself, a little picky about what goes into your digestive tracts, allowing a bartender freedom of expression, or saying “Surprise me!”, is not an option. It would be much better to have an idea of what we prefer, before asking for recommendations. Perhaps it would also be useful to know the reasons behind the proliferation of styles and flavours available to the consumer. For if we remain ignorant of what there is on offer, how are we to assertively state our preference?

As with all things complicated, we need to seek order amidst the apparent chaos. All cocktails can be grouped very simply into 2 general camps; Classic & Creative.

**Classic Cocktails**

Classic cocktails have experienced a worldwide renaissance in recent times. Traditional concoctions such as the Dry Martini, Gimlet, Old Fashioned, Mint Julep, and myriad others have seen a resurgence in popularity. Bartenders have gone back to the basics, re-creating these classics with ultra-premium products and a hearty dose of passion, to re-infuse these bygone greats with that which made them famous in the first place; simple & honest, with good flavour, strength and balance.

For some, it is not only about tastes. The other half of the equation stems from the manner in which classic cocktails are prepared and presented to guests. The Jigger & Pony at Amoy Street brings the subtle art of tableside service, normally associated with fine dining establishments, straight into the bar. Drinks are prepared and flamed in front of guests, all juices and syrups are homemade, even the ice is hand carved from demineralised water for purity and minimal impact on the eventual flavour of the cocktail.

By upping the ante through the use of premium or rare products rather than regular house pours, and by incorporating that with serious cocktail craftsmanship, these innovative establishments have revived the classic cocktail and it is here to stay. Therefore, it is important to know which spirit one has a preference for at a particular point in time. That choice will narrow down the array of cocktails on offer, and will help both bartender and customer reach common ground.

In another recent trend, bartenders have been observed fusing great taste with value through the use of inexpensive ingredients. This is actually more challenging, as you can well imagine, because these products are inexpensive for a reason – they don’t taste as good. Therefore here, it is the bartender’s mixology skills, experience and product knowledge that really matter.

**Creative Cocktails**

When classic cocktails are given a twist, and ingenuity comes into the forefront of matters, we take our first step into the weird and wonderful realm of Creative Cocktails.

In an article, “Have bartenders reached the limits of cocktail innovation?” published by the magazine, The Spirits Business (2014), Tony Conigliaro, creator of famed molecular mixology bar 69 Colebrook Row, in London, opines that bartenders will continue to innovate by the blurring of boundaries not only between food and drink, but also between cocktails and other cultural areas such as music, art and literature.

Some critics claim that the renaissance of classic cocktails across the world would hamper innovation, and impede the creativity of bartenders. But Conigliaro begs to differ. “It’s good to work with narratives outside of our industry and then incorporate them into your drinks – this is how you innovate and keep the industry fresh and exciting,” he said. “Innovation will not stop if bartenders keep doing this.”

Still, the classic cocktail should never be too far removed from the hearts and minds of bartenders worldwide. In the same article by The Spirits Business, Tim Phillips, owner of Bulletin Place in Sydney, was quoted as saying: “In reality, nothing is really new. Innovation is collating different influences from outside and inside our industry and putting them into a drink in a unique way. Every good idea is generally inspired by someone else’s good idea.”

As Singapore becomes more cosmopolitan by the day, clientele are likewise becoming more discerning and therefore more demanding. As with elsewhere, trends are an important facet of doing business. On behalf of industry players, Channel News Asia reports ‘extraordinary growth’ in Singapore’s whiskey market. The American Distilled Spirits Council is eager to introduce more superior grade whiskies to Singapore’s burgeoning whisky drinking clientele.

The same council established that overall US-distilled spirits exports to Singapore reached S$23 million in 2013 - up over 500 per cent since 2003. Mr Frank Coleman, Senior Vice-President of the council mentioned: “Other than the two mature markets in the Asia Pacific region, which would be Japan...”
and Australia, Singapore is without a doubt the largest emerging market for American whiskies and American Distilled Spirits exports of all kinds.”

According to Mr Coleman, whiskies made up about 85 per cent of the exports. “We’re seeing extraordinary growth in Singapore. You have an extraordinary nightlife scene growing in Singapore. I have been to a number of top-notch cocktail bars that can compete with anything you see in London, New York and Tokyo.” Indeed, rather than just drinking it on the rocks, experts say the growing popularity of whisky can be attributed to the spirit being incorporated into more cocktails. Whether it’s rye or malt whisky, single malt or single cask whisky, the choices are plenty - the variety of whiskies in Singapore has grown over the last three to four years as distributors expand their range of products to cater to the growing demand here.

**The Strange and Outlandish**

Elsewhere, Britain seems to be leading the charge for the strange, and the outlandish. Fancy a Whisky Steak? Or a Steak-tini? According to The Spirits Business, the four-star Macdonald Manchester Hotel & Spa has introduced a slew of exotic concoctions to its cocktail menu which are intended to complement a steak dinner. Among the drinks on the menu are the Whisky Steak, a mix of blended Scotch, black pepper and homemade rosemary syrup with a 21-day aged sirloin steak on the side for “soaking or dipping” in the drink. Also available is a Rosemary Gin Steak-tini, featuring gin, dry vermouth and rosemary syrup that is designed to complement an accompanying steak.

To some of us, mixing savoury flavours into a drink isn’t something we’d choose to create an award winning recipe. But these flavours are in fact quite firmly rooted in tradition; think Bloody Mary! Mr Paul Bayliss MBE, general manager at Macdonald Manchester Hotel & Spa, said: “Savoury cocktails have grown in popularity in recent years as mixologists across the world have experimented to add a savoury flavour to spirits.”3 This comes in the wake of the ‘bitters’ craze which is ongoing in some areas, passé in others, demonstrating the volatility of trends and market demand.

And as if steak-tinis weren’t odd enough, how about an ant flavoured gin? Yes, Ants! How’s that for strange?! In a bid to differentiate themselves from others in a fiercely competitive market, Britain’s bars are looking to bespoke spirits & liqueurs created exclusively for a particular bar. This exercise in customisation has led to a rise in the bespoke business, where master distillers work closely with clients to create the flavours unique to their establishments. Here, no expense is spared, quality is the only thing that matters, and the variety of flavours limited only to one’s imagination.

In another article by The Spirits Business, master distiller of The Cambridge Distillery Mr Will Lowe maintains that this is a trend he has seen evolve since founding the company in the UK two years ago. As the “world’s first gin tailor”, Lowe’s services have been sought to create all manner of unusual flavours. None more so perhaps than a gin made using wood ants for The Nordic Food Lab in Denmark. Anty Gin, as it is called, is now served at Copenhagen’s Michelin-starred restaurant, Noma, which also happens to currently be The Best Restaurant in the World.4

“The challenge was can we make a gin without any citrus at all but get that citrus character from ants instead?” explains Lowe. “And we did.” As master distiller, Lowe’s role involves taking the flavour profiles requested by his clients and guiding them through tastings to determine which botanicals complement each other best. In its first year of opening, the distillery made 86 different recipes. By the end of its second that number had grown to 522, and there is currently a three-month waiting list.

**Whither Cocktails**

More than ever before, cocktail culture is experiencing an era of great expansion and diversification, where the only true constant is change. With the mind-boggling array of ingredients out there, Chaos Theory comes to mind. Cocktails are extremely sensitive to initial conditions, where a slight change in flavour can lead to an exponential change in the resultant drink. What is known as the ‘Butterfly Effect’, so called because of the title of a paper given by Edward Lorenz in 1972 to the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, D.C., entitled Predictability: Does the Flap of a Butterfly’s Wings in Brazil set off a Tornado in Texas?.5 The flapping wing represents a small change in the initial condition of the system, which causes a chain of events leading to large-scale phenomena. Had the butterfly not flapped its wings, the trajectory of the system might have been vastly different.

So in truth, we haven’t really come any closer to making sense of it all! But why even attempt to when there is such a wonderfully kaleidoscopic range of palliatives to imbibe? Basically it comes down to what was mentioned at the beginning of this discourse, quite simply, Know Your Preferences. Your individual tastes act like the Lyapunov exponent in Chaos Theory, making the utterly unpredictable slightly less so. Hence, the likelihood of ordering the wrong drink will be significantly diminished. But at first, do not be afraid to experiment. It may take you awhile, and preferences may change, but it is the only surefire way to find your true likes and dislikes. Having said that, drink in moderation and you don’t have to worry too much about the state of your liver! Alcohol is quite safe, as one of America’s founding fathers put it:

“In wine there is wisdom, in beer there is Freedom, in water there is bacteria.”

> Benjamin Franklin

From award winning whites to full-bodied reds, SHATEC alumni had an exclusive taste of some of the world’s best wines from New Zealand at a wine tasting event held specially for them at Recipes a Bistro by SHATEC on Friday, 14 August. Not only were the wines world-class but the company was also exceptional. Besides hosting the shining stars of Singapore’s hospitality industry, this wine-tasting event was graced by the New Zealand Winemaker of the Year for 2012 and 2014, Hamish Clark, Senior Winemaker from Saint Clair.

Saint Clair Family Estate in New Zealand is a critically acclaimed vineyard with a multitude of awards under their belt. The estate is a relatively new player on the scene whose first vintage was only produced in 1994. Despite bursting into the world of viniculture only recently, Saint Clair has won many accolades for their exceptional wines. In fact, their very first vintage in 1994 won three prestigious awards, including a gold for their Saint Clair Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc. Since then, Saint Clair has gone from strength to strength, garnering more awards in the last few years than the three or four hundred other local producers in New Zealand. Suffice it to say, with great company and great wine, this SHATEC Alumni event was a resounding success.
Muhammad Haikel Ismail developed his love for baking when he joined SHATEC’s Diploma in Pastry and Baking. At SHATEC, Haikel learned the trade and secured the skills that enabled him to be an entrepreneur in the industry. Currently the founder and owner of Unico Delice, Chef Haikel as he likes to be known sat down with SHATEC Times to share his thoughts on his education and career.

**SHATEC Times (ST): How has your education at SHATEC helped you in your career?**
Chef Haikel (CH): The skills I learned at SHATEC was the most important. Even now, four years after I graduated, I still remember the notes & techniques that were taught by our chef trainers. I’m thankful to them.

**ST: What inspired you to pursue a career in pastry?**
CH: First of all, of course, my family who have supported me all my life have been very encouraging of my career. Also, my passion to become a chef and my own boss, inspired me to pursue this career.

**ST: What made you open your own business?**
CH: I love to answer this question. I started this business to sell cakes to families with kids that could not afford to have high quality desserts in hotels or even in cafes. So we started this business to provide cakes to them at a very low price. I’m glad that after a few years, we still have them coming back.

**ST: What does the name Unico Delices mean?**
CH: UNICO stands for Unique Company & Delices is French for delicatessen.

**ST: What makes your business different from other pastry businesses?**
CH: We make our own flavouring, create our own designs and, of course, our desserts are halal. Our Muslim customers can enjoy them without any worries.

**ST: What challenges did you face in becoming a pastry entrepreneur?**
CH: I have to keep updated with the trends in cakes and desserts. It’s very tough for us sometimes.

**ST: How do you overcome these challenges?**
CH: I share with other bakers and friends who love to bake. From there, I learn more from all of them. We exchange ideas and keep each other updated.

**ST: What motivates you?**
CH: This is my dream and that’s what motivates me. It is my passion and I also want to become an expert chef like Masterchefs Malaysia Dato Fazley and Chef Wan!

**ST: What words of wisdom/advice do you have for our students?**
CH: Don’t give up. If this is your passion, you have to work hard to succeed! The world is watching your career journey and supporting you in achieving your dream!