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Headline: Turning her passion into a profession

**SCHOLARS' CHOICE II**

Ms Ashwathy follows her heart to live her passion in passion.  
PHOTO: TED CHEN

# Turning her passion into a profession

**Ms Ashwathy S. Kumar****wants to fulfil her potential to excel in the culinary world**

BY JOSHUA WONG

People seldom discover their passion through a mistake, yet it was precisely that which set Ms Ashwathy S. Kumar down her current path.

Instead of putting her off baking, her failed attempt at baking a cake in secondary school galvanised her to think deeply about what had gone wrong and explore how she could do better. With every subsequent baking attempt, she learnt something new — and it was then that she realised baking is her passion.

The 21-year-old has not looked back since that moment of self-discovery.

When she gave up the traditional paper chase to pursue baking, her family and friends initially questioned her decision — especially since she had attained the grades to study something more "appropriate" to them.

Nevertheless, she decided to follow her heart.

After completing a diploma in culinary and catering management at Temasek Polytechnic, she started an online business, Milestones, to sell baked goods. She is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Business Administration in Food Business Management (Baking and Pastry Arts) with the Culinary Institute of America at the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT).

"Baking has given me true fulfilment and joy, and has allowed me to inspire those around me to pursue their dreams," she says.

**The path less travelled**  
During and after her time in polytechnic, she did internships with Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel and Winifred Kriste Cake, a small cake decorating company.

Although exhausting, these experiences taught her much. She was particularly inspired by Ms Winifred Lua, her boss at Winifred Kriste Cake, who worked tirelessly and with perseverance to start her own business and make it successful.

This inspired Ms Ashwathy to persevere through the long and tiring working hours.

"The difficulties I faced strengthened my resolve to work in this industry. While there was much I had to give up, this is the time when I can develop my character and skill set before I enter higher platforms of influence," she says.

**Developing her skill set**  
Yet she is aware that passion needs to be accompanied by competence if it is to bear fruit — hence her decision to pursue a degree at SIT. While she has a lot of practical baking experience, she believes it is important to also learn the proper fundamentals and techniques of the craft.

She applied for, and received, the SIT Scholarship last year after a rigorous application process involving thousands of applicants.

The scholarship covers her tuition fees fully and gave her the confidence to step up to assume leadership roles in school. It helps that there are people who believe in her and have invested resources to develop her potential.

For example, she organises events and activities for her course mates in conjunction with SIT as a member of the Student Management Committee.

In future, Ms Ashwathy hopes to be mentored by other pastry chefs to learn their business practices and improve her skill set, and eventually to open own café.

She says: "You do not have to be academically smart to succeed in life. We are each gifted in our own unique ways, and we should tap and develop those gifts to reach our full potential."