



# HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT TOO

**MS LEE LI LIN KARYLAN**  
51 Fiveone Degrees Pte Ltd

What do Lychee Martini, Apple Crumble, and Strawberry Earl Grey have in common? If you were thinking about an aperitif, a pie, and a cup of tea, then you would be pleasantly surprised to find out that these are in fact flavors from 51 Fiveone Degrees Pte Ltd's diverse range of cupcakes.

This homegrown patisserie, first established in late 2012, specializes in cupcakes, cakes, and various sweet treats. A realization of Ms. Lee Li Lin Karylan's childhood passion for baking, the confectionary has been rapidly expanding their delectable offerings to cater for an ever-increasing demand since they first opened.

Having founded the start-up with financial assistance from her father, Ms. Lee admits that her dream of opening a confectionary was greatly influenced by her upbringing. "Because of our parents' influence at a very young age, we were exposed to entrepreneurship." Thus, when the opportunity to start her own business came along, Ms. Lee wasted no time pursuing it. Despite the risks involved in joining the highly competitive food industry, she committed herself entirely to the running of the shop. "If a vision is ever to be materialized, you will need to be committed to the very end," she says, determined to see her passion come to fruition.

The shop, located in a quiet stretch of road in Toa Payoh, is an endearing one. With rows of cupcakes lovingly displayed, the outlet neatly embodies Ms. Lee's dedication to her work. There are four main products: the Chiffon Cake, Cupcakes, Tartlets, and the Butterbloc, all of which have individual varieties of flavors. The company limits the maximum number of cakes produced daily, in an effort to preserve and ensure the freshness of the products, as well as to minimize wastage. It is this approach to their fine art of baking that upholds the patisserie's quality. In addition, to keep afloat amidst competition from brands such as Twelve Cupcakes, they

**"Simplicity is our key to desserts."**

## Up Close & Personal

### How do you measure success?

To us, success is not measured in monetary terms, but rather an intangible medium. This intangible medium includes the benchmark that we have set for ourselves: to have an edge over our competitors, expanding our client base, building our brand name, and ensuring that our customers are happy and satisfied.

### Please share with us an important lesson in life that you have experienced.

There will be an expectation gap between vision and reality. We've learnt that we needed to work around the circumstances of reality, rather than looking back at the vision that we had. Also, if a vision is ever to be materialized, then you will need to be committed till the very end.

### Looking back now, what were the personal challenges that were necessary for you to overcome, in order for you to achieve your success today?

Living in Generation Y's society, the aspects of criticism, hardship, and social life suffered an impact and changed significantly. Not only did we need to be open and accepting of other's criticism, we also needed to take into consideration how we should further excel in this industry. Hardships were unavoidable. Due to us pursuing our dreams, our social lives had a drastic change, because in all honesty, it is difficult to find a work-life balance.

### What qualities do you think an aspiring entrepreneur should possess?

They should be open-minded, uncompromising, passionate, humble, kind, self-driven, self-motivated, determined, and be able to give more and receive less.

have differentiated their confections in unique ways. "We add different textures to our cakes, so as to intrigue our customer's tastes," explains Ms. Lee, an example of which is the Sunny Ray, a tangy lemon cupcake filled with hazelnut praline and topped with Italian meringue. "We did not increase our headcount, but we did increase the type of products that we carry, and in turn, our customer base."

Despite the company's enticing array of cakes, there were certainly staggering obstacles for the young entrepreneur to overcome initially. With no previous business experience, Ms. Lee admits that she had to make sacrifices for the company. "Our social life had a drastic change, because in all honesty, it is difficult to find a work-life balance." Testament to her dedication to work, she insists that it is important to maintain consistency in the cakes and services they provide for customers. Particular as well about the company's future, she describes foresight as a necessary aspect of the business, recognizing that knowing what the market will eventually demand grants an advantageous edge.

"Invoke a concept to people that sacrifices are needed, and that one needs to be humble, open to criticism, and understand the true meaning of 'there is no free lunch in this world'." she advises, when asked about her thoughts on what could be done to encourage entrepreneurship. These are undoubtedly strong beliefs that have helped her rise to prominence in the confectionary industry, and the resultant success is certainly anything but fleeting.

In the long-run, Ms. Lee wants to turn up the heat, aiming to build up the brand name to leave a mark on the industry. It is an ambitious objective for a young company, but the headstrong Ms. Lee has proven her mettle when it comes to overcoming challenges. Indeed, amidst a market of discerning consumers and innovative competition, 51 Fiveone Degrees Pte Ltd certainly takes the cake and more!