

Baking Up A Storm



FOR SOMEONE WHO WAS ALWAYS CLEAR THAT A 9 TO 5 JOB WAS NOT HER CALLING, CHEF **PRATHANA NARANG** TELLS **BINDU GOPAL RAO** WHY SHE LOVES TO BAKE

In 2012, when she enrolled herself for a Bachelor of Commerce degree in Chennai, she knew that sitting behind a computer at a 9 to 5 job was certainly not what she wanted. Prathana Narang then started attending baking workshops and soon realized that she was actually enjoying it. "I also knew that if I needed to excel in this field, I had to learn from professionals and from those who were the best. After doing some research, I came across Lavonne Academy in Bangalore and decided to do their Diploma course."

Prathana registered herself at Lavonne in May 2015, but a 6-month waiting period and a lack of prior baking experience led to a part time job in HR until the course began. In January 2016, she moved base to Bangalore. A few months and a diploma later she joined the Leela Palace Bangalore for a six-month internship in Baking and Pastry. "Working at the Leela was a crucial part of my career and I was sure that I wanted to continue in the industry of

Pastry Arts. I knew what path I had to choose." Finally, Prathana returned to her alma mater Lavonne in January 2017 as an instructor.

Her role at Lavonne as an Executive Chef Instructor serves to bring out the best in every student. "I am someone who loves to challenge my own learnings to make both my students and myself better." In May 2019, Prathana was crowned the winner of the second edition of India's Callebaut Patisserie of The Year (CPY).

As a run up to the same, she had to put in extra hours after classes to plan and practice her show piece for the contest. "We were given a theme - Artificial Intelligence (AI) taking over the world, and I thought of creating something exquisite as it was a national platform and an incredible opportunity for me to showcase my skill. Certain moments, however, can be extremely challenging because you are out of your comfort zone, out of your kitchen, and in a totally new environment." As winner of the title, Prathana will

be attending a two-day course at the Chocolate Academy Center in Belgium in May 2020, something she is looking forward to eagerly.

According to her, chocolates are a universal favourite for all the right reasons. "If I had to get



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technical, chocolate releases two hormones in the body - dopamine and serotonin - which is why we instantly feel happy when we eat some. On a lighter note, I believe that it is something that brings people together and can put a smile on anyone's face."

As a pastry chef, Prathana admits that she is inspired by everything that she sees around her. "No one object inspires me - it's a combination of situations and things. A cloud inspired me to make a dessert that is light as air, a matchbox once inspired me to make a dessert that looked like it and had flavours related to fire."

The toughest part of her job though, is the process of coming up with a new dish. "The challenge for me is to bring something new to the table everyday while making sure that it tastes amazing and looks even better, so that the art of pastry is consistently being taken to the next level." Prathana hopes to keep striving and creating new forms of art through the small world of pastry and inspire young pastry chefs across the globe!

