

Martha Who? The dawn of a new era ...

Here I am, 34 years old and I've just received the news that I have passed my Culinary Diploma exams with distinction and I will be graduating in a few short months. I will have a Chef's qualification – A Culinary Arts diploma in Food Preparation and Cooking. Hard to believe that just over a year ago, I hardly dared to dream that this could be my reality.

My passion for cooking and all things culinary has grown and grown over the past couple of years, to a level of obsession – our PVR decoder is always on 99.9% capacity. 98% of this being foodie shows and the other 1.9% being limited recordings of my husband's favourite action show "Arrow" (sharing is caring after all). My book shelves are trembling not only from the strain of every food magazine I've ever purchased, but also from a recipe book collection, which I should possibly consider insuring! And then of course, there's my daily ritual – no sooner have my eyes opened in the morning, that I'm asking the question: "What will I cook tonight?". I will spend some enjoyable time conjuring up ideas in my head and after work, pop down to my favourite shop aka "The Mothership", where, trolley and shopping list in hand (you will find endless shopping lists in my handbag), I will pick up the necessary supplies before racing home & carefully unpacking my beloved 'chosen ones', and starting to cook.

I would dare to dream about having a career in the food industry, even sent off a few application letters to some of my favourite foodie magazines, in the hopes that they would see my potential, but that's all that was ...DREAMS.

I never dared to dream that one day my dream would come true.

So how in the space of just over a year did I go from 'foodie day dreamer' to foodie with a chef's qualification embarking on a career in the industry? Well, in January of 2013, whilst lazing on Clifton 1st Beach, with my husband (our summer time local 'hot' spot), a dark shadow cast over me as I realised there was only 5 more days of this holiday bliss before I would be back at my desk, staring at the same computer screen, doing the same thing I had been doing every day since I could remember. So looking for comfort (misery loves it!), I rolled over to face my husband and asked, in a very somber voice, if he could believe that in only 5 short days we would have to go back to work? To which he responded "I'm looking forward to going back to work, I have a lot of exciting projects planned". BLEH! This was NOT the comradery in boycotting work, I was depending on!!! "I wish I loved what I did" I mumbled before rolling back and continuing to read my [TASTE Magazine](#) (Yip, they were one of the magazines I had emailed a few years prior and the Editor was kind enough to respond to me but not kind enough to offer me a job – but still – contact from the Editor of Taste Magazine, was almost enough for me at that stage in my life - I still have the email). Hubby's response, without looking up from his book, "You can, what's stopping you?"

YOU CAN. It was those 2 words that changed everything. I mean, this wasn't a new topic of

discussion, over the years, we had often debated me following my passion and chasing that culinary dream, but for me, it always seemed ‘impossible’, ‘crazy’, ‘something that eluded me’, ‘scary’, ‘ridiculous’, ‘the time was not right’. And now suddenly, there on 1st Beach, his words echoed again “YOU CAN”. It was as if, even though he had been saying the same thing for years, for the first time, my mind actually took those 2 little words in and recognized that he was right... I could! My mind started racing ... I was going to be 33 in a few days, the years were starting to march by, as if in fast forward mode... did I really want to be lying on this beach, a year from now, again feeling as if I had missed my calling? If I was really going to make a go at a career in food, the time really was now! Wasn't it? “Oh no I can't... Let's just forget we had this conversation”.

But I couldn't, moments of overwhelming fear were overcome with moments of ecstatic excitement as I dared to wonder “what if?” I allowed myself to day dream about being a chef, about catering for glamorous and intimate affairs, about having my own cooking studio where I taught people how to cook wholesome good food and share my passion YES. That felt good. What a feeling – it was like a moment of clarity—I'M GOING TO DO IT!!! “You only live once”, “If you don't try you will never know”, “From great risk comes great reward”, “It's now or never”, “don't live with regret”, “what's the worst that could happen?” every predictable proverb I could think of, edged me on.

And then, like a crazy person who forgot to take her meds, my mind started shouting “don't be ridiculous, you can't do this!” fear and uncertainty crept back in and I was embarrassed for thinking I could do it, who did I think I was? Ludicrous. I am Tracey Dewey, not Martha Stewart for heavens sake! But even with the fear, it was too late, something had shifted, the seed had been planted, the thought was there and while my emotions of excitement and of fear wrestled each other relentlessly, I found myself moving forward, calling schools, arranging meetings, starting to conceptualize how this could all possibly work.

After all those years of conversations with Hubby, for the first time, suddenly, it didn't seem impossible. For the first time ever ... the question I suddenly found myself asking and one I wasn't able to answer, was “WHY NOT?” I mean after all, even [Martha Stewart](#), now a culinary & domestic Goddess and an internationally recognized brand in her own right, was once upon a time... just plain old Martha Stewart wasn't she? At the start of her career, upon hearing her name, surely the response was; “Martha Who?”