

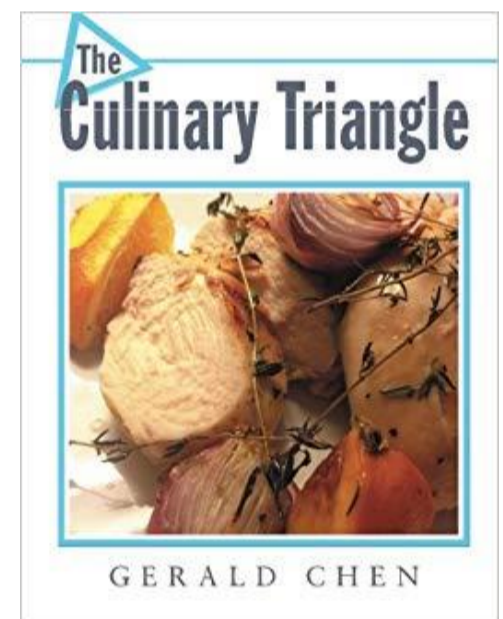
Outstanding Student, School of Hotel and Tourism Management 2019

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BSc (Hons) in Hotel Management



I am Gerald Chen, a final year student from the School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM). It gives me great honor to be selected as the Outstanding Student of my school this year. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude towards my family, teachers and friends for their continuous support.

I remember the days when I was still in high school, watching my favorite culinary TV shows and dreaming about becoming a celebrity chef one day. Inspired by a number of renowned celebrity chefs, my first cookbook, titled “The Culinary Triangle” was published in 2013 when I was 15. It was a remarkable experience and has brought my interest in cooking to the next level. This was only made possible with the help and support from my mother, who is always there for me, encouraging me to follow my heart and dream, whose unconditional love and teaching made a great part of who I am today. My passion for culinary arts has gradually evolved from my summer internships at the Food and Beverage Division of The Kowloon Hotel and LSG Sky Chef. I came to realize that I am not only passionate about cooking but appreciate the way good food can bring people together and create delightful memories. To bring joy to people is the reason why I enjoy cooking in the first place and what motivated me to pursue an undergraduate degree in hospitality. Over the course of my studies in the past 4 years, I have learned more beyond managing a hotel and gained a broad spectrum of business knowledge, from designing user experience, hotel operation to property planning and development.



During my university life, I was also given the privilege to get involved in multiple student organization committees and projects. I was a member of AIESEC in my freshman and sophomore year. I was proud to be a member of a youth-led organization and be able to contribute to the society. During my first summer at PolyU, I joined a global volunteering project at Helsinki for 6 weeks where I got to work with other inspirational volunteers who hold the same value and ambition as I do in making the world a better place. I was able to experience and appreciate the value of diversity and the power of global unity at first hand. AIESEC has made me become more aware of what is happening in the world and has also given me the opportunity to develop my leadership skills. In addition to AIESEC, SHTM also has multiple student chapters that aim to uncover different facets of the hospitality industry. As SHTM has a very diverse community, my executive committees were also made up of individuals with different cultural backgrounds. Being the chairman of the Club Managers’ Association Student Chapter in 2018-2019 and the Vice President of Eta Sigma Delta this year, I have learnt the importance of inclusion in leading a diverse team. I am forever grateful to the faculty advisors who have guided me throughout the journey, and I could not thank my team enough for their dedication and contribution.



The General Manager at the St. Regis Hong Kong once told me that good hospitality comes with good observation, as this allows us to anticipate the needs of customers through which to create memorable client experiences. As a hotel management major and in view of the nature of our industry, I strongly believe that international exposure is vital to our success as we meet and interact with people from all walks of life every day. The more experience we have in interacting with people from different cultures and backgrounds, the easier we will be able to connect and resonate with our colleagues and clients. After my volunteer work in Helsinki, I was determined to complete my Work-Integrated Education (WIE) abroad. It was a frustrating yet rewarding experience. I could not even remember how many hotels I have approached before I was finally offered an internship from Sheraton Grand Sydney Hyde Park just 2 weeks before the deadline. My 6-month internship at Sheraton in the Sales and Marketing Department has broadened my horizon and enriched my knowledge of the hotel business. I gained hands-on experience in prospecting clients, handling clients' account and managing clients' request.



After my internship, I was fortunate to be awarded the Kwok Hospitality Award, and was granted a scholarship for academic exchange at Cornell University for a semester. The opportunity to study abroad allowed me to immerse in a different learning environment and has indisputably broadened my perspective.



It has been an amazing and fruitful journey and the most precious things that I have gained through these experiences are the people that I got to meet along the way, all the friends and mentors that have guided me and the networks that I have established which are all critical to my personal and professional growth. It has been a challenging year for all of us this year, from online teaching to a tough job market. May we all stay strong and support each other through this difficult time as we embrace the coming challenges with great strength and positivity.

