

BAKING

Third-year apprentice Claire Roque bakes for a living, but she also bakes for fun. During her days off from her day job at Chez Christoph in Burnaby Heights, Claire experiments with her own creations at home, adding photos of her creations to Instagram where she is creating her portfolio. She will try new combinations of flavours, for example, recently she made a semi-freddo with an apricot caramel sauce, brown butter almond sponge cake, a cocoa-nib dentelle and salted popcorn. She also likes to experiment with creating different flavoured entremets, or mousse cakes.



At Claire's home, baking is a big part of family life and her father especially loves to bake Filipino treats to take to parties. Claire started helping out from a young age.

Claire's first career idea was to follow in her sister's footsteps in fashion design, but when she tagged along to a Skills B.C. competition in Grade 9, she was so inspired by the baking she saw there. "I remember telling myself this is something I want to do – it really interested me," she said.

In Grade 10, her teacher suggested she compete in the baking competition, and she did, winning gold. She then went on to compete in nationals, winning gold again. By then, Claire was hooked. Baking – and competing in baking – were her focus.

In her Grade 12 year, Claire took part in the Vancouver School Board's Youth TRAIN in Trades baking program, which runs in partnership with Vancouver Community College on Monday to

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Thursday afternoons. This left her mornings and all-day Friday to complete her requirements to graduate from her home school, Eric Hamber Secondary. In the trades program, she was back to competing, capturing a silver at provincials.

After completing the first-year ITA baker's training in Grade 12 and graduating from high school, Claire was hired as the baker at Hook Seabar in English Bay, collaborating with the head chef on desserts. But after finishing her second-year ITA exams, Claire wanted to work with a pastry chef to broaden her skills in baking and she was hired at Chez Christoph in the Burnaby Heights area. As a third-year apprentice in a French-Swiss pastry shop, Claire is deepening her knowledge about baking, both the practical and the esthetic side. She is learning to be consistent in her baking – as a professional baker, the products must be perfectly shaped and baked every single time.

Claire loved doing the six-month baking program through the VSB's career programs – her group of classmates were all passionate about and dedicated to the field of baking, and they formed a cohesive group. Getting to school was never a problem as she looked forward to her program every day, she said. And she feels she has lots of job opportunities ahead of her. "I feel like I have a good head start," Claire said about her career direction. "I can be a baker, a pastry chef, a chocolatier, I can work in catering, in hotels or a pastry shop, or on a cruise ship."

This year, the intensity of baking competitions will be stepped up a notch as Claire prepares to go head-to-head with the national gold-medal winner in a two-day competition in May in Halifax. The winner of that competition will go to the world skills championships in Kazan, Russia, in August.

For information on the Youth TRAIN in Trades baking program, go to:
<https://bit.ly/2Lq3Ja5>



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