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ENG1101

Unit 1: Educational Narrative

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Educational Narrative

Ever since I was a kid it was always my dream to become a chef. Growing up I always loved watching chefs on the cooking shows make whatever it was they were going to make, I even loved watching my mom make my family dinner, usually something that she used to eat back when she was a kid in Mexico. There was even my older brother who would usually bake whatever it was he wanted.. Watching them turn simple ingredients into all these sorts of dishes was always so fascinating to me, so when my mom asked me the simple question “What do you want to be when you grow up?” I simply told her “chef”. For such a simple answer, it almost defined my life.

I would often watch and help my mom make dinner, seeing the way she made the food and learning the way she does it, even if our kitchen was small and cramped and the food she prepared wasn't complex or special, there was something about hearing her talk about the food she was making that made those memories in the kitchen special. For a while this was the only type of experience I had in a kitchen until I finally got out of middle school where I enrolled in a high school called Food and Finance High School. During my time in that school they had taught me so much, not only about cooking but about every aspect of culinary arts from food safety, kitchen safety, equipment, measurements, techniques, and everything else there was to it. Writing

down everything I can, this was one of the few times that I was actually eager to learn something. It wasn't like I didn't care about learning, I always read my books and write down whatever it was they were teaching me at the moment, but to actually want to learn something and doing your very best to understand the material they were teaching was something I wasn't used to. The first time I received my chef uniform and was allowed in the kitchen I felt excited. The classroom kitchen they had showed use was much larger than the one at home, in the corner of the room was the class seating area and right next to it was the walk in freezer and storage area, and right across was the kitchen where there were racks of equipment that we would be using with a row of oven behind the grill and stove and right behind a prep area by the side and the cleaning station all the way in the back. Getting to work in this kitchen was so amazing, getting to see what working in a real kitchen was like and getting to use all the information they taught me and getting to actually put it to use.

The time I spent in that kitchen was great and everything but the best part of the day was whenever I came back to school with the food I had made and letting my family try it and them telling me how good it was and enjoying my food, the pride and joy I feel just made me realize that this was something I wanted to do with my life. Helping out in the kitchen in whatever way I can and helping my culinary instructors out in the kitchen and them telling me how I did a great job just always kept me going, and during parent teacher conference where they would tell my mother or brother that I would do excellent in a kitchen, there was always a feeling of accomplishment that would follow when they said those words. This would last until sophomore year when the pandemic had hit. Schools ended up closing and the classes I had to attend were now virtual.

All my culinary classes were done through a computer screen where they taught me whatever it was they were teaching me, and while they did try their best to make the classes work it just wasn't really the same. I hated being stuck in my house for most of the day barely doing anything, not even learning anything new. This feeling lasted until spring break where I had nothing to do really, nothing but some work I had to complete during class. But then I realized I had a whole day with nothing to do. Why don't I try to make something while I have the time to put all the knowledge I learned in school at home. When I had asked my siblings if they wanted me to try and bake them something the first thing they had wanted me to make was just brownies. So that's what I was going to make. I started by cleaning every surface of the kitchen from the stove to the counter to the dishes. While the kitchen was still cramped and small I had made just enough space to work on making the brownies. For about an hour I worked on making them and once they were finally finished and ready for my family to try and just like whenever I brought something home from school they ended up enjoying it. During this pandemic I found the time to actually work in a kitchen and while it wasn't in a big kitchen with all sort of equipment it still felt nice, I loved asking my family what they wanted me to make and I loved making something they enjoyed, it was the main reason why I wanted to learn culinary arts, I enjoyed making people happy. Learning to make all sorts of recipes and learning from previous dishes and learning from my mistakes was something I loved doing.

Entering my last year of high school, there was an internship program that I applied for where they sent students to work at restaurants around NYC. The place I got assigned to was a bar where I worked as a prep cook, this was the first real experience that I had working in a professional kitchen. The people there were friendly and welcoming and working with them was great, and seeing the skills they displayed while working in the kitchen and trying my best to

learn from what they were doing made me realize that there is still so much more for me to learn and experience. During my last day when my supervisor, who also happened to be the sous chef, had invited me to the office where she showed me a sheet on my performance at the place. As I was about to leave she had told me that “if you’re serious about working in this industry then maybe one day you can be in the same position as me”.

Finishing high school I decided that the only thing that made sense was to major in hospitality management. I want to learn everything I can about the industry and do my best to focus on my culinary education. The simple response of me wanting to be a chef is what led me to majoring in hospitality so I want to do everything I can to be a chef.