

DARE

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SS\$4.00 November 2004

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PATRICIA YUEN >>

The privileged doctor who says she "never lives in regret"

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Cover Personality

What's up, doc?

Dividing her time between two different but equally rewarding careers, dermatologist and restaurateur **Patricia Yuen** reveals how she finds a balance

BOTOX MAY NOT GIVE a woman back her youth, but it can give her something much more valuable – a sense of confidence. Being the agent of her patients' transformation inside and out is what gives skin specialist Patricia Yuen, 37, of MD Specialist Healthcare Paragon, the greatest satisfaction in her eight-year dermatology career.

She marvels at how her chosen field of medicine has seen many innovations in the last five to ten years; latest advances include newer non-invasive methods to rejuvenate the skin without surgery. "I find this very fascinating," remarks the Prada-clad, Manolo-shod dermatologist, whose patients run the gamut from students to socialites.

On a personal level, she likes her profession because it does not necessitate emergencies or night calls, unlike other areas of medicine.

"Balance is very important to me. Being a dermatologist satisfies the perfectionist scientist in me, yet it affords me quality time with my family, and allows me to pursue my other interests, like food, wine and sports," she adds.

THE DOCTOR GOURMET

Patricia discovered her love for good food and wine as a student at Brown University in Rhode Island. She would go into New York City to check out different restaurants on weekends, unlike her peers who would be out watching football or ice hockey. Her palate was introduced to different trends like fusion cuisine, nouveau Japanese, progressive New Mexican, and she dreamt of being part of this culinary landscape.

She remembers, "I even stole menus from cool places, thinking that one day I would be a proud owner of one too. And it has come true."

Her restaurant/catering business, The Marmalade Group, which started in 1999, is a thriving venture with three other friends, Shareen Khattar, Nicholas Chan, and Camellia Tan. Patricia says, "The restaurant business was born out of a personal passion. No one with a sane mind would open a restaurant otherwise!"


It started with one restaurant, Marmalade. It has since closed but almost every year since then, there has been a new one — Pierside Kitchen And Bar in 2000, Pantry in 2002, and Toast in 2003. She heads its catering arm, Marmalade At Home, which was started in 2001..

This part of the business came out of a trend she identified, wherein people want to showcase their lifestyles and homes, and combine it with a fine dining experience. Corporate lunches are also a growing niche.

"We love to be challenged – we have done Tex Mex pool parties, garden weddings, product launches, champagne brunches on yachts, and even a doggie birthday party!" The last, Patricia reveals, was for her Jack Russell Terrier Dakota's first

PHOTOGRAPHY RUTH SOH
STYLING SHEH
HAIR AND MAKEUP FLORENCE LIM
OUTFIT COTTON T-SHIRT AND SILK/LYCRA SKIRT BY JOHN GALLIANO/CLUB 21 LADIES
ACCESSORIES SASSI PERIDOT RING, SASSI BLUE TOPAZ RING, AND NUDO BLU TOPAZ EARRINGS/POMELLATO

INTERVIEW JOYCE LIM



“There is a lot to be said about a dog’s unfaltering love and devotion, and the way that they embrace life with such gusto and innocence”

Patricia with her Jack Russell Terrier, Dakota, 3



Patricia with her partners Nicholas, Camellia and Shareen, at the opening of Pierside Kitchen And Bar in 2000

“I am always over-indulgent when it comes to people I love. It may not be a good thing all the time, but as long as we all enjoy ourselves, why not? Life is too short not to indulge”

birthday party. And they say it's a dog's life!

She confesses, “I am always over-indulgent when it comes to people I love. It may not be a good thing all the time, but as long as we all enjoy ourselves, why not? Life is too short not to indulge.”

The bachelorette is a wine and champagne lover as well. She orchestrates the restaurants' wine lists and organises the wine dinners. “I enjoy discovering the rare gem that blows your mind without cleaning out your pocket, and sharing that with friends and customers. That's why I enjoyed living in San Francisco so much when I was doing my residency from 1993 to 1996, because there, the Napa and Sonoma Valleys are literally in your backyard!”

KEEPING BUSY

The clinic and the catering business keep her on her toes but Patricia declares that there is no other way she would like it to be. “I am very lucky because what seems like work to others is fun for me.

“The restaurant business is, and has been something I've always been dying to do, so given that my one big motto in life is never to live in regret, I ventured into the food and beverage industry. Coming from a non-restaurant background, the learning curve was very steep.”

She meets weekly with her Marmalade team at lunch time, spends a few hours a week on the restaurant and catering business. Besides her private practice in Orchard Road, she maintains a couple of morning clinics at the National University Hospital. For balance, Wednesday and Friday

mornings are put aside for yoga practice.

She says she is kept grounded by the different types of patients she sees. The NUH ones tend to be needy patients seeking treatment for medical problems like psoriasis, eczema and skin infections. Her private practice is skewed towards aesthetic dermatology such as Botox, fillers and Fotofacial radiofrequency treatments.

“Cosmetic surgery has really ‘come out of the closet’ over the past five years,” says Patricia.

“Creating a youthful appearance through medical procedures is a common commodity desired and demanded by a large segment of the population.”

These procedures can be very addictive, she admits. “You could start off with a chemical peel to improve skin texture, then you might want to try the new radiofrequency treatment to close the pores, and while you're at it, you think about getting rid of your wrinkles or augmenting your lips. This can go on forever!”

It can be a dilemma when patients make requests for procedures which she may feel are unnecessary. Still, if it can be done and it makes her patients happy, she'll do it. However, she stresses, “There is something to be said for inner beauty. And you have to be realistic. You can't expect perfection, as it doesn't exist.” **D**

THE BUSINESS OF BEAUTY

Now that spas and beauty salons are “jumping on the cosmetic bandwagon”, Patricia says consumers should be more aware

- A dermatologist is trained to understand the pathogenesis of skin disorders and why different products work on different problem areas. An aesthetician or GP does not have that level of expertise
- Specialists are equipped with the technique and technology; they know how to adjust specialised lasers according to skin colour, severity of acne scarring, and types of pigmentation. Beauty therapists don't undergo such training and results may thus vary