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JULY 2003

DR PATRICIA YUEN
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DARE TO
DREAM

Dr Patricia Yuen believes in seizing opportunities,
writes **Siswati Samad**.

Envy her or call her fortunate but Dr Patricia Yuen is living her dreams. While many of us are hazy about what course to take, this lady has a steady hand steering her wheel of fortune. "I think one should follow one's passion and that is basically what I am doing. I guess you have to seize opportunities and extend yourself. If you don't, then you will never realise your dreams. I believe in pursuing what I truly believe in. Otherwise you will never know and live to regret it," says 36 year-old Dr Yuen, a consultant dermatologist in private practice and the co-owner of the Marmalade Group which owns a chain of trendy eateries – Marmalade, Pierside Kitchen & Bar and The Marmalade Pantry.

It is hard to imagine 'regret' is ever in the spirited doctor's dictionary. Sitting in the her own "unit" attached to the family's sprawling townhouse, a project Dr Yuen worked on for two years with a renowned architect, she comes across as a self-assured professional who dares to go after what she wants.

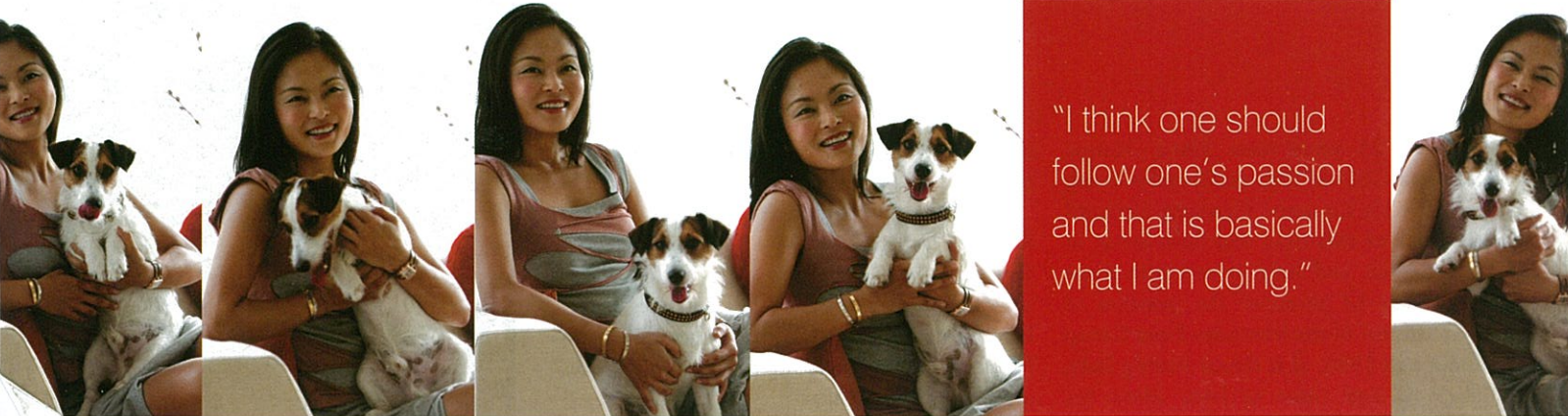
Her days at Brown University, while pursuing a Human Biology/ Race and Gender course helped Dr Yuen in her search for her true calling. "I was really trying to open my eyes to many different fields,

graphic at NUH is very different from what you get in private practice. It keeps you grounded," admits Dr Yuen, who at the moment, is excited about the non-invasive technology, the current trend in cosmetic dermatology, which she feels will take off in a big way in Singapore.

Her return to Singapore was with some misgivings as Dr Yuen admits to having a great fondness for San Francisco. "Honestly, it is for my parents that I returned to Singapore. I love my life in San Francisco – the lifestyle, the people, the weather," states Dr Yuen wistfully.

The only daughter of two children however believes that as a medical professional, Singapore provides her with the challenges she needs to expand her skills. "The infrastructure here is great and medical facilities are advanced. It took me a while to adjust to the system here when I got back but I am into the groove now."

It looks like getting back into the swing of things has been easy for the active doctor. On top of her medical commitments, Dr Yuen, together with friends Shareen Khattar, Camellia Tan (who is no longer in the group) and Nicholas Chan managed to create a buzz in the local food and beverage industry with their hip chain of eateries and bar. "It



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exploring all options that are available. I interned during the summer breaks, working in emergency rooms in California and investment banks on Wall Street just to get in touch with what I really wanted to do as a career," recounts Dr Yuen who graduated in 1990. Her diverse experience while at Brown University proved to Dr Yuen that she really enjoyed working with people and that she could use her scientific training in a way that would benefit them. Hence she chose medicine as a career. Once the decision was made, Dr Yuen enrolled herself in Boston University School of Medicine for a four-year gruelling course.

Sweat and dedication paid off but a medical degree was not enough. Dr Yuen wanted to be a "good physician" and the best thing for her, she thought was to specialise in internal medicine. Ambition was matched with a steely determination. Dr Yuen graduated from the San Francisco University in 1997, thus fulfilling her dream.

"I came back to Singapore and decided that internal medicine was just too broad and I wanted to sub-specialise. So I decided to join the dermatology department at the National University Hospital (NUH) as it integrates dermatology with internal medicine and you learn more about the dermatological manifestations of internal medicine," observes Dr Yuen who went into private practice (that specialises in cosmetic dermatology) two years ago. Today, the dermatologist spends two mornings a week at NUH to attend to the patients there because "the patients there are really needy patients and it is very gratifying to be able to make a difference in their lives.

"I think the balance between a very market-driven practice with emphasis on aesthetics compared to the bread and butter academic medicine that you practice in NUH is important. The patient demo-

has been a fun experience and I have learned a lot from my friends. They are business savvy and very inspiring. Just the interactions with them gave me a lot of energy.

"I look forward to going to our meetings every week and bouncing ideas off each other which we do constantly," says the self-confessed foodie who now heads the Marmalade Group's catering business. It may sound trendy, but being plugged into the food and beverage scene is not without liabilities, as Dr Yuen discovers. "When I am eating in a place, I am constantly thinking – 'ah this could be done better' or 'oh, we can learn something here'. Sometimes I think I should just relax!" laughs Dr Yuen.

Her role in the group, she says, is largely drawing up the wine list for Marmalade's restaurant and bar. This is something Dr Yuen, who is single, enjoys doing, having cultivated an appreciation for wines.

"The whole family has a love for wine. Gradually I acquired my own taste and it has been evolving since. I used to love Californian wines but now I prefer New Zealand wines as I think they are up and coming. I want to try everything and the only way to learn about wine is to taste it."

You might think the lady has her plate full, but Dr Yuen believes in seizing the day. Golf, tennis, swimming, yoga and cookery keep her occupied and her beloved Dakota, her Jack Russell dog sometimes has to compete for his mistress' time.

"In life it is important to find a balance and so it is a real challenge to be able to balance your career with hobbies and pursuing personal goals. I think this keeps me going and inspired," smiles the dynamic lady. 🐾