



ON A BED OF FLOWERS

Running a business built on beauty and grace is definitely a feat that many can't pull off, especially in the world of floristry. It takes a dedication towards inspiring the hearts and emotions of people's lives, to make those special moments unforgettable. **Brenda Lee Monteiro** is one such person who has nurtured such a passion and has turned it into a living. She tells THE ASPIRANT how sometimes love might really be all you need to go far.

interviewed by MICHAEL NG

Tell us how you created your success?

I believe success is very much a journey. It is a journey to find what you really love doing. This is because when you find what you really love doing, you stop working and you start endeavouring towards a dream and mission. When you have a purpose, your heart will push you to break the limits and create something special and that is what brings success. For me I am driven by my passion for flowers. When I see my customers light up at my work I am so grateful and I realize how much I love my job.

The world of floral design is so interesting. As a business what is it like? What is a usual day of business like?

Floristry is a very hands on kind of thing, just like any art form. So things are very busy as a lot of care is taken to each piece or bouquet if you would call it. We deal in the world of making moments magic. People pay us to inspire through beauty, so that we can touch the lives of those who receive our art. I am lucky to have a dedicated team to work with me and since the dedication is there it is just a bunch of people passing the day by doing what they love.

What was the defining moment for you during your journey?

If I were to talk about my journey wholeheartedly, I must express my gratitude to God for having given me the talent, passion and means to begin and grow this business. I've been impacted so much from the Church I attend and I've seen my life blossom... including the business. The major milestone of success for me came a couple of years ago when I did 3 major events in the same year that had dignitaries and distinguished guests in the grandest of locations. This catapulted us to another level of recognition as many more people became aware of the scale and grandeur of our creative work.

Why the floral business?

I began my design career as a Fashion Designer. I worked creatively with colours, textures and style. This was more than 10 years ago and I felt then that the local fashion industry may

have had limitations to how creative we could be because there was always a commercial element you had to contend with. I was passionate about flowers and even though it didn't appear that it could be a commercial success, I believed it could be done more creatively and eventually it would be well-received by more people. In a way, it started a market that didn't quite exist back then.

Would you consider the floral business a daring one to enter in Singapore?

The floral business can be hard work. That's why the passion for flowers has to be there or you'll burn out and feel it's an uphill climb. When you're starting out, you'll have to put in the hours, sacrifice holiday periods because it is a good season for the business and in order to grow, you'll need good committed people. That's why I count myself blessed to be where I am with a great team supporting me.

You have completed a Masters in the Floral Design. Do you believe that it is important to have the right qualifications in order to be successful?

It is not the paper qualification that makes you better in the case of the floral industry, it's what your hands can do. It's the fact that you're being equipped with the skills and the ability to push the boundaries of floral design. In a good Masters course, you'll witness first hand the works of the best designers who will influence you and critique you. If you can impress the best of them, it'll inspire you further and bolster your confidence.

How does Fiore Dorato stand out from the rest of the pack?

From every bouquet to every event we do is different because we want it to be very personalised. We do not have the approach of a catalog range of products or arrangements like many companies out there. We're here to serve a niche, hence we consider what our client desires to convey in their gift or event, what it should express to the receiver or guest and put together a design that reflects that. When a client allows, we stretch the boundaries of

design to create something even bolder and different. This can make the gift all the more memorable and impactful.

How do you keep so much inspiration for your work then?

I've traveled to different parts of Europe, America and Asia for inspiration. I have also visited the works of world-renowned designers and award winners in the industry. Since design is ever-evolving, I won't stop traveling and being exposed to what's out there. Inspiration is all around us and if we place close enough attention, we can capture so much.

What advice can you give to people who are aspiring to go on the daring business venture of floristry?

Find out as much as you need about the floral business. Really understand the pros and the cons. And if you're still keen on pursuing it, try being hands-on in doing floral arrangements on a day to day basis, perhaps in a home-business setting. Ask friends and relatives for honest feedback on how good they think you are. After all this, if you're still keen, it's an indicator that you're serious about pursuing this and may have what it takes for the long haul.