

Passion through Chocolate

Sugar, a sweet crystalline substance. Sucre, the place to go for all of your confectionary dreams in New Orleans. NOCCA, the place where young artists come to pursue their dreams. Before attending NOCCA I thought I knew what I wanted to do with rest of my life. I had this vision of graduating high school, going to the Culinary Institute of America, and opening up this mind-blowing cupcake shop. Not only was I wrong, I realized I didn't know at all what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. Freshmen and sophomore year I was just getting by and I seemed to had lost my love for culinary. It took me speaking with Emeril Lagasse's daughter, Jilly Lagasse to realize that I was actually doing such great things.

The days were going by faster and junior year was quickly approaching. I knew that once Junior Year came around I would have to kick it into high gear and get serious about colleges. The process of looking at colleges when I didn't know what I wanted was so difficult. It was like looking for something that didn't exist. After a couple months of stressing, I found a new passion for the art of Molecular Gastronomy. It intrigued me because it was a way that I could do what I loved as well as showcase my art just like all the other disciplines at NOCCA. After exploring and researching Molecular Gastronomy I started to love the science of food. I started to wonder in what ways I could make something great and still keep the integrity of my product. This is when I started looking into colleges with Food Science programs. As my search continued, I discovered the Culinology program in which I would be able to study the science of food and put it to use in culinary classes. Finding this program really helped me narrow my search. It wasn't long until I came across the Culinology program at Mississippi State University, which was not too far from home. They had everything I wanted; a food science major, culinary classes, and a traditional college experience. I soon stopped looking for colleges because I just knew after my first visit that it was the place for me.

At this point, I wanted to open a cafe which would still allow me to make pastries and express my love for it. From there I wanted to do a couple of molecular gastronomy pop-ups and if they were successful my ultimate goal would be to open a molecular gastronomy restaurant. This had been my goal up until Chef Tariq Hanna, Executive Pastry Chef, and partner of Sucre taught our Culinary class. This class managed to peak all of my interests, there was no point in our two and a half hour block that I got bored. From the beginning of the class when he said, "I'm going to give the chocolate talk I've always wanted to give." I was intrigued. He truly expressed his love and passion for the world of chocolate and pastry. As he began the lesson he said,

"First, we are going to learn the science behind chocolate because I know everyone here wants to learn it. Right?" This is when both the lightbulb in my head went off and my hand went up. I said, "I do." It was at this moment that I realized that all I thought I knew about chocolate and the world of pastry was so minuscule compared to what I was getting ready to learn. In this one class alone I learned that chocolate is more complex than just white, milk, and dark. Every chocolate that we discussed and tasted had its own personality. Chef Tariq expressed these personalities and individualities through his personal stories and connections to each chocolate. This class taught me so much about chocolate, but so much more about myself. I realized that I had never lost my love for pastry. I just needed someone to help me find it again. Chef Tariq helped me realize that not only did I love pastry, but I have a *passion* for it.

