

CCSF Culinary Arts

Evelyn Figueroa

EVELYN'S BACKGROUND

Evelyn Figueroa is originally from El Salvador and has always enjoyed working with people. That's why she liked her job at the front desk of the Hyatt Regency Hotel. "It's where I learned to love this industry, to love hospitality." During her five years there, she became a confident supervisor. So, when Evelyn's husband, the owner of a popular El Salvadoran pupusa restaurant in the Mission called Balompie, asked her to manage the restaurant, she felt up to the job.

WHAT BROUGHT EVELYN TO CCSF

Evelyn's first day at the restaurant was harder than she expected. "I was really good at the front of house, but when I would go inside the kitchen, I was out of my comfort zone." A lot of the staff had been there for over a decade and Evelyn says they didn't like her coming in and giving directions. "An employee asked me what was I doing in the kitchen if I didn't know how to cook and I couldn't answer that question." It made her uncomfortable, but she thought he had a point. "I was not secure about myself as a manager. I was not prepared. I didn't know how to tell them to do their job and if I wanted to manage, I needed to educate myself." She'd heard about CCSF and decided to sign up for an Introduction to Supervision and Management class.

EVELYN'S CCSF EXPERIENCE

On the first day of class, Evelyn noticed a lot of students wearing white chef uniforms. They told her they were in the Culinary Arts Management Associate Degree program and Evelyn was intrigued. "So, when we had to close down the restaurant for [earthquake] retrofitting, I said, you know what? I can go full time. This is my opportunity." Now Evelyn is nearly finished with her second semester of the program and loving it, especially the lessons on creating sauces, salsas and stocks. "Wow, I mean the confidence I'm getting in this program, it's very good. The chefs and the instructors are always available. Any question you have, they'll help. It's a welcoming environment."

WHY CCSF WAS A GOOD CHOICE FOR EVELYN

Evelyn says she's surprised by how much she's learned and how much she enjoys cooking now. "You know, when I got married, I thought, wow, I will never have to cook again because we have a restaurant. But, then I found out it was the opposite. Now I need to cook because I have a restaurant. I'm so glad I'm in this program and I'm looking forward to helping the restaurant and keeping it alive." Balompie is opening again in August, but Evelyn's going to keep attending classes full time. After another year, "I know I can go there and feel just as comfortable in the back of the house as the front." In the meantime, "I practice, I cook for my family every night and my eight-year-old son actually gets excited about the food I make. I think that's the best reward."

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Degree:

Culinary Arts Management (A.S.)

Time Spent at CCSF:

2 semesters full-time / 2 semesters to go before completing A.S.

Link to Program Description:

<https://www.ccsf.edu/dam/ccsf/documents/OfficeOfInstruction/Catalog/Programs/CulinaryArtsandHospitalityStudies/CulinaryArtsManagementMajor.pdf>