

#Mondaymotivation: Ali Pumfrey (Class of 2010)



Alumna Ali Pumfrey has embarked on a culinary career about which she is truly passionate. After working in top London restaurants, she has now set up her own catering business, [Ali Pumfrey Chef](#)

What were your first steps after leaving Putney High School?

When I left Putney High School in 2010, I took a gap year and travelled around South America and Australia. After that I went to the University of Bristol to study Psychology.

How did you get into food?

I have always loved food, and it was my half Italian and half French grandmother who initially inspired my love of good food and cooking. During my time at university, I cooked a lot and experimented with different cuisines and recipes. In addition, during my holidays, I worked as a private chef for families on their summer breaks and I absolutely loved it.

How did you make the jump to working in the food industry?

I tried to find a job in advertising and landed a role in the marketing and sales department of Rosewood London, an ultra-luxury hotel. Here I was increasingly drawn towards the fine dining experiences offered by the hotel. This made me realise that I wasn't on the right career path as I just didn't enjoy my job as much as I loved to cook! It was then that I decided to take the plunge and do a cookery course, gaining a Diploma in Food and Wine at Leiths Cookery School. This gave me the skills and confidence to pursue a career in the food industry. I believe that all of my life experiences, from making pancakes with my grandmother as a child to attending a masterclass with Tom Kerridge as a chef, have given me the drive to follow my passion.

What challenges have you encountered along the way?

When I left University, it was really hard to find a job that I was truly passionate about. Since becoming a chef, I have embarked on such an exciting chapter in my life. I have worked in top London restaurants and have now set up my own catering business. There are tough aspects about the job, for example, long hours and being on your feet all day. However, this style of work suits me, I am a very active person and love the energy and creativity that I have to put into my work.

What type of catering do you do?

I am really passionate about flavoursome and delicious food made from fresh and seasonal ingredients. Here are just some of the dishes we create;



Beef



Duck Risotto



A Lunch Spread



Shakshuka

How do you think Putney High School has helped you?

Putney High School taught me to be determined. I was never in the top sets, in fact, I was in set five for GCSE Maths. Through hard work and with the help of an amazing teacher (Miss Buckle), I obtained an A* and I went on to study Maths for A-Level. This showed me, if you really set your mind to something, you can achieve fantastic results. This also taught me that it is good to challenge yourself. Along with Psychology, Maths ended up being my best subject at A-Level and I would not have got into Bristol University without it!



What advice would you give to Putney High School pupils and alumnae?

Don't panic if you do not know what you want to do. I definitely didn't know that I was going to become a chef and set up my own food business when I left school! Be open to trying different things, and do lots of work experience to find what it is that you love to do.