

#Monthllymotivation: Christina Brierwood (class of 2009)



After realising architecture was not the right career for her, Christina realised she felt at home in the world of patisserie.

Since leaving Putney, has there been a particular career highlight?

So far, it was being asked to contribute to the Royal Wedding cake for Princess Eugenie and Jack Brooksbank. It was an amazing experience to cook in the kitchens of Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle!

So how did you become part of the team to bake a Royal Wedding cake?

After leaving Putney with A levels in Art, Maths and Spanish, it seemed like a natural progression to study Architecture. However, whilst studying for my degree at Oxford Brookes, I realised that this particular mix of maths and art was not for me.

How did you know what direction to go in next?

Whilst I was trying to figure out what career I wanted, my family suggested that I should do a cooking course. I had always been drawn into the kitchen from an early age; for my Putney 11+ interview I had taken in a pasta dryer and spoken about how much I loved cooking on the weekends. It was quite clear to both of my parents that I entered into some kind of trance like, peaceful state when I was in the kitchen. So, I enrolled in [Le Cordon Bleu](#) (LCB) to do both pastry and cuisine. After the first week I knew that this was something that I definitely wanted to pursue further. I then went on to complete the course and earn '[Le Grand Diplôme](#)'.

After gaining one of the most prestigious culinary qualifications, where did you work?

I started working in kitchens for some of the top restaurants in Europe, and for chefs such as Pierre Koffmann, Marianne Lumb, and Elena and Juan Mari Arzak.

What was it like working under such incredible chefs?

It was an eye-opening experience, and certainly very different from the type of 'desk job' that I had thought I would have! The hours were long and anti-social, and the environment was fast paced and aggressive. However, it was wonderful to see that at the heart of the best kitchens, there are strong teams who are passionate to create something beautiful and to show the ultimate potential of each ingredient to the customer.

What are you currently focussing on?

In 2017 after finishing a summer working at [Arzak](#), San Sebastian, I started my own business- '[Cakes by Christina Brierwood](#)'. I had always loved baking, and quickly discovered I thoroughly enjoyed the artistic side of patisserie. The joy that pastry brings to people is universal, it's hard to receive a cake and not smile! I set up 'Cakes by Christina Brierwood' to provide unique, [beautiful and flavourful cakes](#).

What part did school life play in you choosing this vocation?

Putney may have not taught me the exact skills for becoming a chef, but the life lessons I absorbed from my teachers and peers has really helped me. The strength and determination of women coming out of Putney is incredible. In a male dominated kitchen it is sometimes hard to stand your ground, but Putney taught me that it was ok to be heard and ask for help. Keep asking questions ... there are no stupid ones!

