**Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth, and a new understanding of yourself or others.**

To many people, a cup of coffee is an insignificant part of their morning routine to jolt awake, and rush to school and work. This, however, did not turn out to be the case for me as I visited a cafe to learn how to brew coffee for the first time in my life. The first time I came to the cafe was during my junior year winter break, on a Wednesday afternoon. The owner of the cafe was a trained barista himself and a huge fan of all types of coffee. He taught me a few methods of manual brew, which included the V60 pour-over, by far a modern favorite. I also came to learn about the process of coffee making, and where exactly it comes from. Although I was doing this with no expectations going forward, I came more often to the cafe, and would leave each day having learned something new about coffee.

I entered my junior year of high school fixated on the idea of going to school in a bustling metropolis, majoring in business economics, and later entering a consulting career. What I was unaware of back then was that my goal was not necessarily interconnected with my own passions. I just wanted to take economics because it felt safe and everyone said it would guarantee a stable career in life. A taste of coffee revolutionized that. When I figured out what made each cup of coffee different from the other, I began to note that my path in life would be redirected towards science. This also reflected on my academic mindset, as I became more directed in pursuit of my new goal.

Then, I hit a wall. My school did not have enough facilities to help me grow into my new interests. The science labs were small, and the materials were limited. So, I looked for other extracurricular activities that would help me further my knowledge and teach me new skills in science. I ended up spending the summer before my senior year in two activities : a life science immersion program overseas and a dairy science course at a local university. The former was a more general program and provided me with a broad scope of the applications of life science, which I was more than grateful to have. The latter, by far my favorite, allowed me to work in a food pilot plant, and learn more about food processing and food safety with regards to milk and its products. Both these summer programs convinced me even more that I was really interested in food science, and demonstrate how I am willing to take my passions outside of a school setting.

In addition to extracurricular exploration, coffee also inspired me to attempt some DIY experiments at home. As a way of expressing my creativity, I replicated a few fermentation experiments such as making kimchi, honey garlic, sauerkraut, and vinegar from scratch. At first, they did not ferment properly and become a pain to throw away, but as I continued to make them, they turned out to become excellent food products that I enjoy with my family.

As it turns out, coffee is bittersweet. The largest reason why not everyone enjoys coffee is because they turn away at the slightest taste of bitterness. At the start of high school, I neglected everything that had to do with science, and focused on what I thought was my passion in economics. But after one taste of the bitterness in coffee, the natural sweetness gives way and comes out. I gave myself a chance to try something new in that cafe, and it ended up paying off and leading me to discover my true passion in food. To reach a sweet ending, there always needs to be a bitter start, which then makes for a bittersweet journey.

**Please tell us why you want to attend UMass Amherst? (max. 100 words)**

The Food Science Department at UMass Amherst provides many research opportunities that will help further my post-graduation career through its unique combination of teaching and research facilities available for undergraduates. Particularly on Food Science concentrations, I am elated that both my interests in Nutrition as well as Food Technology are represented as streams, allowing me to opt into a more streamlined study course. Naturally, I am also excited to join in research opportunities, especially on food safety at the Clydesdale Center, as well as collaborations with third-party agencies and firms.

**Please tell us why you chose the Majors you did? (max. 100 words)**

I would love to continue my studies in a field where I am able to express my creativity through experimenting on food. In an age where health is of utmost importance and in highest demand, I want to implement the knowledge I learn through Food Science into creating healthy and tasty consumables. I can affect the wellbeing of those around me in a more positive way by improving their lifestyles through improving the nutritional value and sensory value of foods consumed. I also want to be able to improve my own lifestyle and develop a healthier way of living.