

First Cooking we Feast

Exploring our inner foodie with *Culinary Crème*



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IN A room full of individuals whose single commonality is their university, food is something that unites them so tightly. *Culinary Crème* is UIC's first cooking club that wishes to bring people together over a shared interest in food. Founded by two international students, *Culinary Crème* encourages members to cook and eat while expanding their social circles. *The Yonsei Annals* interviewed the club President Pelin Akkaya (Sr., UIC, Comparative Lit. & Culture and Culture & Design Management), Vice President Fatimatou Zahra Ndiaye (Jr., UIC, Int, Studies) and Design Team Leader Samantha Leung (Jr., UIC, Culture & Design Management) to know more about the club.

Annals: Please briefly introduce your club, *Culinary Crème*.

Akkaya: *Culinary Crème* is UIC's first English cooking club founded by me and our Vice President, Fatimatou Zahra Ndiaye, in the Spring semester of 2020. We are a food club that aims to invite people to a social environment where a shared passion for eating, cooking, baking, or anything food-related can organically foster connections with people they otherwise could have possibly never met.



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Annals: Why was the club founded?

Akkaya: Both Ndiaye and I are foodies, and we enjoy finding good restaurants. I had naturally applied to a Yonsei cooking club in my second semester of freshman year, but my application was rejected because the club operated exclusively in Korean. Upon realizing that UIC did not have a culinary club, I was even more motivated to take up Ndiaye's offer when she reached out to me about starting a cooking club without any exclusionary selection criteria!

Annals: What makes *Culinary Crème* stand out among other social cooking clubs in Yonsei? Are there any requirements to join?

Akkaya: As I said, a wider variety of students can join since all our activities are conducted in English. Neither Ndiaye nor I am aware of a cooking club on campus that predominantly uses English. When we make recruitment announcements, we always emphasize that "all we need is your application and a slight club

fee." We do not have a particular selection process. Everyone is welcome to join as long as they are Yonsei students. We also have members who have already graduated from Yonsei, which makes our club activities more diverse and fun!

Annals: Your club was founded during the pandemic. What have your activities been like so far?

Akkaya: With the ongoing pandemic, we knew our activities would be restricted; however, that did not deter us from having a lot of diverse activities this past semester. With the help of our executive management members, we have done online activities like movie nights, online cooking workshops, and trivia nights to replace offline events. When we would conduct offline events, we were very meticulous, constantly checking up on changing government regulations on social distancing and the number of people who can convene in one space. Accordingly, we created a rotation system where we switch the members who would meet offline. This ensures that members

get to meet members they have not met before in most, if not all, of the few offline meetings we had. Through this system, we aim to have all our club members meet each other at least once throughout the semester.

Annals: Why did you join *Culinary Crème*?

Leung: I really love looking at new baking recipes and learning about other cultures through food in my free time. I was really keen on meeting people who may feel the same.

Annals: Are there any particularly fond memories you have during your time in *Culinary Crème*?

Leung: My fondest memory was during my first semester when, after establishing the club, all the members went out to an Indian restaurant called Jyoti in Sinchon for dinner. We had chosen the restaurant after looking at the good reviews of the place and a lot of our members had not tried Indian food before, so it was a nice opportunity to learn about different cuisines. Due to the pandemic, it was the very first club meeting I had attended in person ever since enrolling in UIC. Hanging out with my fellow Yonsei mates after a long time felt like a breath of fresh air.

Annals: Were there any kind of unexpected challenges you faced or lessons you learned out of joining the club?

Leung: As a design team leader and social media manager, I am responsible for curating promotional posters and Instagram content, in addition to brainstorming with the other leaders about club events and activities. It has been quite difficult to recruit members that will remain with us through the entire semester and continue to participate in our events. The club has just started its operations, so we have a lot to improve on in terms of leadership and event planning. Still, we are actively doing our best to create a community for people that enjoy cooking/baking or food in general. As a regular club member, I learned that the time I spend with people who really click with me is what actually makes the activities we conduct so meaningful. Hence, as we continue to plan events based on our members' "appetite," I am



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confident that we will continue to meet more people and share our culture through food.

Annals: What are your plans and goals for *Culinary Crème*? Do you have any future activities planned for existing and future club members to look forward to?

Ndiaye: When we first started *Culinary Crème*, it was to share our passion with others but also to give people an avenue to make friends in this pandemic. We wanted it to be a bridge between international students and Korean students as all the other food clubs were exclusively for Korean speakers.

After successfully completing two semesters of activities despite COVID-19, we are slowly starting to realize the inefficiencies in our club proceedings. One example would be our organization of cooking workshops; they are not the easiest way to bring the members together since only a limited number of people can meet. Room reservations with necessary space and equipment have been a constant struggle. Therefore, one of the major changes we made this semester is to focus more on spending time together at restaurants and cafés rather than cooking. However, we are still planning to hold face-to-face cooking workshops for those who are interested, and we even intend to start a system of food bank volunteering.

In a few years, I truly hope that *Culinary Crème* becomes a renowned, model Yonsei

club that helps unite Yonsei students and grow to the point where the club has its own food banks and extends help for those in need.

Annals: Finally, is there anything you would like aspiring members to know about **Culinary Crème?**

Ndiaye: *Culinary Crème* is a very laid-back club where you can get the opportunity to meet other people who have the same passion for food as you. We do not have any strict scheduling and always take the members' opinions into account when organizing meetings or choosing a date for get-togethers. We also welcome all students regardless of their majors and school year without the hassle of an interview. So, if you are looking for a fun club where you can relax while having delicious food, don't hesitate to join us! 🍴



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