

(0:00) Hi, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. (0:05) Let me just double check with you that you are okay with being recorded?

(0:10) Yeah.

(0:10) So in this interview, we're going to be exploring a bit more about you know, your cooking habits and your food waste habits.

(0:18) So let's dive right in. Can you briefly introduce yourself, maybe tell us where you're from, what you're studying, where you're studying and so on?

(0:28) Yeah, so I'm studying at the University of Queensland like UQ right now, and then I'm in my second semester as a Master of Interaction Design student. I'm originally from Singapore, so I'm an international student.

(0:44) So you've been in Australia for roughly about a year, coming to a year?

(0:49) Yeah, almost a year.

(0:51) Can you tell me a bit more about your current living situation?

(0:57) I am currently staying outside in a two-bedroom apartment with like one housemate. But I used to stay in a student accommodation last semester.

(1:08) Okay, can you tell me more about your current life? Are you satisfied with it? And do you find that you like living with your current housemate?

(1:19) It's alright, but because like when I moved out, I took over someone's lease because this girl was like graduating. And I just moved to this apartment because it's near campus, and I wanted to move out of my student accounts because the lease was expiring. So currently, my housemate is like a local, but she is not at home like 90% of the time, because she stays with her parents sometimes. So 90% of the time, it's just me.

(1:46) Oh, that's nice. (1:48) So it works out quite nicely for you. Can you compare that to your student accommodation experience? How was living in a student accommodation?

(2:02) I stayed in a four-bedroom apartment, so I had three other roommates.

(2:09) And were you satisfied then? Like was it okay for you then?

(2:14) Yeah, I think it's okay. Like in general, like back home, I live with my family and all that. So actually, I'm very used to having people around.

(2:22) Okay, okay. Yeah, that's nice. Now, currently, how often do you cook at home? Would you say?

(2:30) Like every day. I cook a lot, like every day.

(2:34) Nice. Do you meal prep or is it like you're just cooking almost like every single meal?

(2:42) Most of the time, I'm cooking almost every single meal. When I first started in Australia, I did try to meal prep. But then after a while, I got a bit tired or lazy also. Because if you meal prep, you need to cook a lot at one go. So I'm also a bit lazy. So nowadays, I do a lot of like one-pot meals. Like dump everything into one pot, then just like eat out of the pot also. Like only do one thing, you know.

(3:05) Okay, that's nice. So what challenges do you face when deciding what to cook? Like what I have in the fridge.

(3:17) Like I have to think about what ingredients that I have. Then I can only cook whatever that I have, basically. Do you sometimes get bored with what you cook?

(3:27) Do you find yourself repeating meals quite a bit?

(3:31) Yes. Yeah, I was just talking to someone like the other day. I was like, oh my gosh, I'm starting to cook like the same thing over and over again. I'm a bit boring.

(3:42) And how do you feel about cooking with other people?

(3:45) You know, like maybe sharing, like coming together, cooking and then sharing a meal. Do you find that fun or enjoyable?

(3:52) Yeah, I think it's more fun. Like when we were in student accounts, like because I had friends who live in the same building as me. I think that's what I miss about living in student accounts. Basically, it's like someone like, you know, like end-of-sem party or whatever. Then they are like, okay, everybody cook one dish and bring. Then we all just cook one dish, then we bring, then we share. Like it's quite nice.

(4:21) And how right now, how often do you say you participate in social activities outside of school?

(4:33) Depends on how busy I am with school. Maybe weekly as I'm quite extroverted. So usually I like to, as in if I'm not like drowning in assignments, I will do something. Sometimes it's just sports actually, like go play badminton with someone.

(4:50) So you would say like social interaction is quite important to you. Yeah.

(4:56) And do you think that food is a catalyst for social interactions?

(5:02) Yes, I would think so. I like to, during breaks and stuff, I like to bake. Then I will bake with friends. It's like fun. For me, I do like to, I mean like I wish my roommate was someone that actually was at home and cooked. Because like it's quite fun to cook together also. Like if you are, like it's bonding activity. Yeah. Assuming you want to bond with the person, but yeah.

(5:31) Okay, just a couple of questions about food waste. Do you ever find yourself throwing away food? And if so, how often?

(5:41) Yeah, sometimes like if I like, when I buy stuff, I have to be very careful about like what I buy, whether or not like you can keep. So like the other day I just bought like too much chicken by accident and I forgot to freeze it. And I kept thinking like, because I cook every day, right? So I kept thinking like, it's fine. I'll use it tomorrow or whatever. But then like, like tomorrow then I have no fuel to eat chicken. So then after a week, my chicken was still in the fridge. And I threw it away.

(6:10) How do you feel when you have to throw food away?

(6:13) Oh, I feel bad. Like wasted. But yeah, it's what, so cannot. But yeah, also like, I think I remember when I was like moving house, like moving out of my accoms and stuff. I also have friends who like, because they cannot take everything with them, right? So they will be like giving away, like if you want this or not, just take that kind. Or when I was moving also, I just took, because I had housemaid ma back then. So like, whatever that I have in the kitchen, the fridge then is like, I don't want to bring, Like milk or what. I'll just be like, it's in the fridge, y'all just use lah. So I guess you would say you are quite open to sharing ingredients with others to prevent food waste lah. Yeah, I think it's also because I used to stay, like as in, I stay at home with my family and everything. Then my grandma, I stay with my grandparents. So my grandma cook a lot. So like, I'm very used to like, having a lot of different types of ingredients in my dishes. I don't like to have like, like just one item. Like, you know, like I cannot eat like food. Like when I eat food right, I must have like vegetable, then I must have meat, then I must have carbs. You know that kind of thing. It's not like, I can cook like mac and cheese, then it's just cheese and macaroni. I cannot, I cannot like, I must have like things. So usually I would like, buy quite a lot of ingredients. Then I have to see how I can mix and match or whatever.

(7:43) Okay, okay. So, do you ever crave food from home in Singapore? Like Singaporean food?

(7:52) Yes, I guess. (7:53) Yeah, occasionally.

(7:55) And would you go out of your way to try and recreate the dishes?

(8:03) Yes, I will buy, I think the only thing is like, Singapore laksa, then I will buy the Prima laksa, the instant noodles. Yeah, that's what I do.

(8:28) But do you ever want to, you know, try and cook new, like, recipes from home or food from home but there's just too many things to buy and like, the ingredient list is too long and you know, you're scared to just buy because there'll be a lot of food left over.

(8:45) Yeah, so like, I think Asian cooking especially requires a lot of ingredients. Like, literally so much ingredients. And I very like, there are certain things that I don't buy just

because I know like, I will never finish it on time. Like for example, like cilantro or like the, you know, the siang cai. Cilantro right, that one like, it's used in quite a lot of like, Asian dishes and I actually like it but I don't buy it. Because that one right, you buy a lot and then you use a bit and then like, one or two days later, then it's spoiled already. You cannot use it for more than a few days. So, that's something that, yeah, like you can't do unless you have like, if you're making a lot of food, then it makes sense right, for household or something.

(9:28) Okay, and then, would you say that in terms of, you know, the social part of it, like, would you like to share Singaporean food or like, Asian food with people outside our culture?

(9:47) Yeah, sure, why not. So, I have a friend, she's from India, like, she's one of my close friends. I might move in with her like, next semester. Okay. And then, we were talking about how, because I cook a lot. So, we were talking about how like, we will just share like, our different cooking style and stuff because she doesn't really need like, Asian food because she's Indian. Like, specifically like, she doesn't even like, you know, even she cook rice and stuff, it's like basmati rice, not like our Asian style, like jasmine rice. So, like, last time she came over there, I just cook for her. Yeah, nice. It's quite fun.

(10:18) Would you also be interested in learning about how she cooks in her cuisine?

(10:23) Yeah.

(10:24) Yeah, okay, that's nice. So, we're coming to the end of the interview, just a couple more questions. What do you think could be done to make cooking and socializing easier for, you know, other international students? Like, if there was like, a platform for us to like, find people near us and stuff and I mean like, to communicate all this kind of stuff to people that are like, near us and all that kind of stuff.

(11:02) Like, for me, when I ended up sharing food with my friends that time previously, it's because we were staying in the same building. So, it's convenient. Okay, and then if there was an app, so let's say that there's an app that could help you find co-cooking events or, you know, maybe even just sharing ingredients. What features would you find most helpful?

(11:29) I think location is helpful. I mean like, within the app, chat function is also like, important right? Because you need to talk to people. I don't know, like filters and stuff. Maybe like, people can have their own page where they can post up like, what they want or what?

(11:56) I think it's a social app for looking for ingredients or looking for people to cook and eat with or both. People can also list out specific food that they want to cook. So, let's say someone wants to make chicken rice, then someone can bring the chicken, someone can bring the rice, someone can bring like, the ginger and spring onion, that

kind of thing. Then everyone just comes together and cooks. But I think a couple of things that were noted by a few other respondents is the trust and reliability of the people on the application. So, would you say that that is something that weighs heavily on your mind when engaging in an activity like this?

(12:42) Yeah, I feel like it's like, I would do this if I already know people. But it could be more of like, I feel like there should be like, an element involved that allows people to like, get to know each other before, or like, form their own like, little groups to do this kind of stuff. Like, when I was in student accounts and stuff, half the time, I only ended up doing like, sharing food with people and all that kind of stuff. It's because I met them previously, like, from like, other events. So, it was like, there was some event, then I met them, then I already know like, they are this kind of person. Then I'll be more open to be like, okay, let's do other things together, that kind of thing. Because if not, like, also a bit, I mean, it's either, yeah, it's like, if you were to cook together, then you need to know the people. If not, it's like, a bit weird. But if it's just like, solely like, let's say you're getting your ingredients, because you're moving out, then like, I have all this free food, just take. Then, that one is like, really, you don't need to know people, because like, people will take free food, you know, it's like, literally, free food, if you want, just come and take that kind. Then, it's a bit like, lower barrier to entry in a sense, like, you don't need to know people, like, it's just for you to broadcast it if anybody wants. Like, I will just go and take, I don't know the person, I will also take their free food if I find someone who wants.

(14:07) Okay, got it. So, just to summarise, you don't mind taking food, but cooking with other people and sharing ingredients is a bit more awkward, might be a bit awkward.

(14:19) Yeah.

(14:20) Got it. And let's say we impose a rating system, so maybe, let's say, Carousel, right, then you can rate one another. Then, let's say, everyone, like, this person is very credible, and you and your friend try and partner with this person, and their friend, who's also very highly rated, would that kind of make you feel a bit more at ease?

(14:44) I guess, or it could be like, a platform for, as in, maybe, like, people to organise, like, for people who want to organise, like, there needs to be, like, those people who want to take initiative to, like, you know, like, those, meet up, like, meet up,

(14:59) Like, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I get it, I get it.

(15:01) Like, people organise, like, events on their own, then other people can sign up.

(15:05) Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

(15:06) Then, other people who want to sign up, like, want to meet new people, they will just go and sign up for whatever, like, other people already, like, organise, and all that.

(15:14) Then, you have the option to sign up with friends also, la.

(15:18) Yeah, it could be something like that.

(15:20) So, kind of, like, event, right?

(15:21) Because then, people meet new people. Yeah, so, people meet new people via all those kind of apps.

(15:26) Okay, thank you.

(15:27) Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience, or any other suggestions? (15:34) Nope.

(15:35) Okay, thank you so much for your time.