





TENACIOUS TASTE

ENTREPRENEURSHIP ALUMNA ENERGIZES
NEW BRAUNFELS FOOD SCENE WITH
TEX-EUROPEAN RESTAURANT

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Recent Bauer College alumna Rashmi Bhat (BBA '14) discovered her career path early in life, although she didn't know it at the time. "Food' was my first word as a baby," she said. "In the back of my mind, I always knew I wanted a restaurant."

But, that didn't become clear until she completed her undergraduate program at Bauer last year.

"I graduated with three job offers," Bhat said. "I came home to New Braunfels to decide on which offer, but I realized that I wanted to open my restaurant."

Never one to take things slowly, she worked right away to launch Bonjour Texas! in New Braunfels. The dedication she applied in building her business is characteristic of Bhat, who eagerly explored every opportunity she was presented during her student experience at Bauer.

She completed Bauer's Wolff Center for Entrepreneurship program, including a first place win in the 2014 Giants Entrepreneurship Challenge Business Plan Competition, and the Ted Bauer Leadership Certificate Program. She also won the college's CougarPitch competition and served on the inaugural year of Bauer's Cougar Venture Fund. And, in 2013, Bhat founded FemCity UH, a business-oriented organization for female entrepreneurs.

"I wanted to grab every opportunity where I had the choice to say, 'Certainly I can,'" Bhat said, referring to a quote from Theodore Roosevelt that has become her mantra — "Whenever you are asked if you can do a job, tell 'em, 'Certainly I can!' Then get busy and find out how to do it."

Bhat was inspired by the delis and restaurants that she enjoyed with her family during her childhood years in France and Europe. She and her parents collaborated with European chefs and Texas foodie friends to create the Bonjour Texas! menu, including premium quality ingredients, sourced both locally (artisan breads and baguettes from a local bakery) and from Europe (gruyere cheese from France, Swiss cheese from Switzerland).

Just a year into business, Bonjour Texas! has received positive customer feedback on review sites like Yelp and TripAdvisor, and Bhat continues to build her customer base with an active social media presence.

Even though she is a young business owner at just 22, Bhat is learning to assert herself and build a team.

"When you're running a restaurant, it can be hard at first telling someone what to do, especially when they're older than you are, but you learn to deal with those small issues and get the job done," Bhat said.

Eventually, Bhat hopes to open another restaurant, this one with an Indian menu. The restaurant industry can be a bit of a rollercoaster, she said, but with the support of her family and friends, along with her passion for food, she's pursuing something she has loved all her life.

"I love what we do, and I love bringing new ideas," Bhat said. "It is a lot of work, but if you don't love it, don't do it."

JUST LAST YEAR, RASHMI BHAT (BBA '14) OPENED BONJOUR TEXAS!, IN NEW BRAUNFELS, OFFERING EUROPEAN FOODS WITH A TEXAS TWIST.

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