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For more information, please call our Customer Service Hotline: 6339 0613 or visit www.owellbodycare.com. Refreshingly OWELL

For her, all the world's in full bloom



BRENDA LEE MONTEIRO
34, floral designer and founder of Fiore Dorato

SHE once had to manage 30,000 red roses and use them to transform a hotel ballroom into magical setting in just 12 hours.

Another time, she had to handle three events in a row, each attended by the same 2,000 guests.

The challenge: Each event had to be more spectacular than the last.

Welcome to just another day in the life of Brenda Lee Monteiro, a local floral designer who counts tycoons, CEOs and celebrities among her growing clientele.

She started out as a fashion designer 11 years ago but felt the local scene was too small to make an impact. So, she decided to set up her own boutique at Republic Plaza, not clothes – but flowers.

This 34-year-old has even completed a prestigious Master in Floral Design course in Holland.

She met up with LEE U-WEN (u-wen@mediacorp.com.sg) and shared her passion for the trade and why she feels Singapore's floral industry has plenty of room to grow before it really blossoms.



KOH MUI FONG

risks in your designs. So, a designer often has to go with a commercial, rather than a creative, approach.

It dawned on me that floral arrangements did not have a distinctive style. As the word "arrangement" suggests, design or styling wasn't obvious. I believed there would be an appreciation for floral "design", so that gave birth to my shop "Fiore Dorato", a floral boutique selling "exquisite flowers".

How do you motivate yourself?
As a fashion designer, I never got to see customers' reaction when they bought the clothes I designed off the rack in the store.

Now, I have the joy of seeing a customer's face light up when I present them with the bouquet they ordered.

Many times, they are not buying the flowers for themselves but for someone else. And when I hear how it pleases the recipient, it thrills me too.

When you have a customer who keeps coming back, you know you have done something right.

You have travelled extensively to learn about flowers. Which country is your favourite?

I have seen and learned a lot from places such as Holland, Paris, Belgium, Hong Kong, San Francisco

and New York.

But Holland inspired me the most with its flower auctions, renowned suppliers of flowers and floral accessories, world-class floral design schools and designers. Also, the Dutch are really

friendly people, who love what they do.

You say the local floral industry has some way to go before it can reach the standards of Europe or America. Why?

In America and Europe, florists constantly upgrade their skills and infuse creativity in their designs. They set themselves apart as professionals. Some have even published books showcasing their work. That shows how passionate they are about flowers.

In Singapore, we need to change our mentality. More florists should aspire to be "floral designers" and invest in themselves by learning from their counterparts in other countries.

Around the world, we see designers come up with fresh ideas all the time. It should be no different for our own floral industry.

When more florists start to think this way, we will see our industry rise to new levels of design and service.

Could you share with us what you learned in your Master in Floral Design course?

I was trained in Holland and my respect for European floral design motivated me to complete my Masters about 10 years ago.

It built my confidence and skill level tremendously.

The course involved creating different designs that would be strictly assessed by reputed floral designers. I learned from the best and that showed me there was so

much more that could be done with flowers.

What are your plans for the next 10 years?

I plan to expand my business. My husband and I will move to a two-storey floral boutique in a conservation shophouse in the coming year.

Having done many unique and elaborate weddings, I also want to put together a coffee-table book that I can share with fellow floral designers in Singapore.

If given the opportunity, I would like to take part in the next Interflora World Cup. That's an international competition in which contestants make arrangements that look more like modern artwork than the average bouquet in a vase.

When Valentine's Day rolls around, some of your male customers fork out \$380 for a bouquet of flowers. Do you believe a man ought to pay this much or even more to prove his love?

People pay for what they value. Men today believe their gift of flowers on Valentine's Day should be special and show how extravagant their love is for their special someone.

And I say rightly so!

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Singapore's Iconic Hilltop Destination

AUTUMN SENSATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

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- **Daily Supper:** Enjoy some delicious light supper after 11pm daily.
- **A Shopping Paradise Awaits You:** Visit The Jewel Cottage and Faber Forest during "Jewel Hour" from 8pm to 9pm and get 10% off all items! Find great bargains at the "Jewel Night Shopping" from 7pm to MIDNIGHT!

*Available from Thursday to Saturday, Eve of Public Holidays and Public Holidays.

For more information, visit www.mountfaber.com.sg or call Customer Service at 6377 9688. Make your reservation at www.mountfaber.com.sg/reservation.htm

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