

Tuesday 26 May 2020

## **Kina Bank brand ambassador: Chef Julz Henao, The Healthy Food Co.**

In this article Kina Bank features brand ambassador, Chef Julz, founder and owner of The Healthy Food Company. The Healthy Food Company is a Papua New Guinean start-up food delivery business specialising in healthy cuisine inspired by local fresh produce. Founded and owned by international Chef Julz Henao. He has worked in award winning restaurants in London, Hong Kong and Sydney. Results-oriented, driven and well-travelled, Julz brings his experiences from overseas, combining it with fresh local ingredients and flavours, and trained techniques. He is serving up what he describes as 'modern PNG cooking'. His story is one of setting and pursuing ambitious goals and a deep love for PNG food and culture.

I didn't realise until I was a little bit older that I wanted to become a chef and take up cooking as a serious career. Growing up with aunties and mum cooking, whether it be aigir or mumu, and being surrounded by people prepping vegetables influenced my passion to cook. There are happy memories I associate with food; mum baking a cake and me licking the chocolate from the bowl or off my fingers and getting it all over my face. It was at university that I got more inspiration to pursue cooking. I was studying international business at the time and after my lectures I would watch Jamie Oliver cooking shows and I'd try to cook what he cooked on TV. I soon decided that I didn't want to study anymore. I understood that a cooking career required time and experience and I didn't want to wake up at 30 years old and realise that I wasted ten years of my life doing something that I didn't enjoy. So I rang mum and dad told them I wanted to cook and was fortunate that my family was supportive.

I started cooking at 19 years old and set out ambitious goals that I wanted achieve. This included working at a Michelin star restaurant in London by the time I was 30. I had no idea how I was to achieve that, but I set out with confidence. I achieved that dream when I was 26 - I didn't even realise until I was on the flight to London from Hong Kong and had a moment of reflection. Traveling to places like London and Hong Kong and getting sponsorship to work at restaurants with a PNG passport was pretty hard. But you focus on something that you want and it figures itself out.

My main goal with The Healthy Food Co. is to show everyone that the ingredients we have in PNG are pretty good - world-class ingredients - and we can cook some really good food with them. Which is my business philosophy: I enjoy showcasing local PNG produce and trying to do my own twist, not moving too far from what the ingredient actually is, but just helping the ingredient along and not changing the structure of it. Also I enjoy giving money back to local suppliers, because I think that's what it's all about. So choosing to be a brand ambassador for Kina Bank was easy. Representing a local bank and brand matches with my philosophy.

Some of my business challenges are tracking overhead costs and managing the administrative tasks. Our business model is very adaptive with the food delivery aspect. About thirty percent of my customers pay cash on delivery. We've started the process of getting a Kina Bank POS terminal and intend to go completely cashless in the next month. Transacting only via Kina Bank's digital channels. Which really helps us as a small start-up business with our reconciliation process. It also eliminates security concerns around cash handling.

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Being a food company representing a bank that is using digital platforms more is exciting. Especially for the younger generation that are tech savvy and who are future business owners. I think for them to be able to do their banking on the phone anywhere is pretty cool.

**Ends.**

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