



Norma Condo

Chef

In 2016, Norma came across a pamphlet from the Pearson School of Culinary Arts (PSCA). Reading it, she realized that the Professional Cooking program was exactly what she needed to follow her dream. She eventually drove nine hours with her husband from her home in Connecticut to attend the interview at PSCA in Lasalle.

A new beginning. Tragedy strikes

Once her acceptance was confirmed, Norma made a second trip to find an apartment. She moved her five children and her husband and wrapped up their life in Connecticut to prepare for the move to Montreal. Life was unfolding as it should. Then, tragedy struck. Harold, Norma's husband, died unexpectedly one month before she started school. Despite this, Norma decided to start her studies even though she was grief-stricken by her husband's death. "I nearly quit school many times. I had to keep reminding myself that I wanted to do this. I had to be strong for my kids."

Returning to school many years after finishing her studies, dealing with her husband's death, raising her children, and living in a new/unfamiliar city was overwhelming. Focusing on school was particularly difficult. At times, Norma would leave the classroom frustrated with herself.

Support from teachers

She finally confided in her teachers. “I couldn’t have made it without their support,” says Norma. Nancy Gagnon and Eric Gregor-Pearse, chef instructors at PSCA, both admired Norma’s perseverance, work ethic, and professionalism as she completed her course.

“Norma’s experience was a rollercoaster ride, and she came through with flying colours. She’s a remarkable woman on so many levels.” Added Mr. Gregor-Pearse, “We all saw incredible potential in Norma. We believed in her.”

After finishing the program, Norma decided to take the advanced cooking program, Market Fresh Cuisine. She knew that she would need to learn the more advanced techniques if she was going to follow her dream. That experience was invaluable in teaching her how to create menus.

In 2019, Norma launched her business, [Miqmak Catering Indigenous Kitchen](#). It began as catering but soon became Montreal’s first permanent restaurant dedicated to Indigenous cuisine. She has appeared in [Chatelaine](#), on the cover of [Tourisme Autochtone Québec](#), and was one of 9 Indigenous business owners to receive an entrepreneurship grant from WestJet and the [Indigenous Tourism Association Of Canada](#).

More recently, she was invited to participate in [La Grande Tablée](#) at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel on Monday, November 8th and at the Québec Chateau Frontenac on Monday, November 15th, 2021.

From speaking to local organizations to encouraging native women to pursue their dreams, Norma is committed to helping others. Her message? “Anything is possible. Keep your mind focused. Go after what

you want. Don't give up. A big thank you to all of my teachers at the Lester B. Pearson School Board! They believed in me and thanks to their support I made one of my biggest dreams come true".