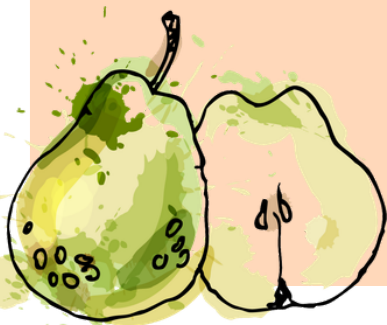


# OUR CANTEEN STORY

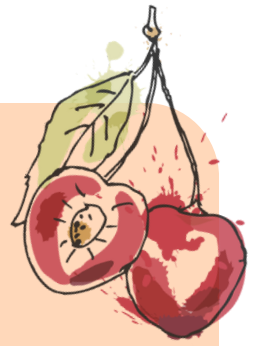


*At the end of last term, we got to know a bit more about Chef Raj, who helms our school canteen. This term, we will feature the rest of the canteen staff!*

## MEET MS JENNIE (AKA MS J)



# OUR CANTEEN STORY



**Q: How has your experience been so far in NUSH?**

**A:** It's been very fun, especially interacting with Gen Z students and learning from them. As a mother with a Sec 2 daughter, I treat the students as if they are my own and I'm always worried they will go hungry.

**Q: What do you enjoy the most about working here?**

**A:** The students are all different, and their requests can be pretty interesting. Some of them even ask for less and less rice each time – it's quite funny!

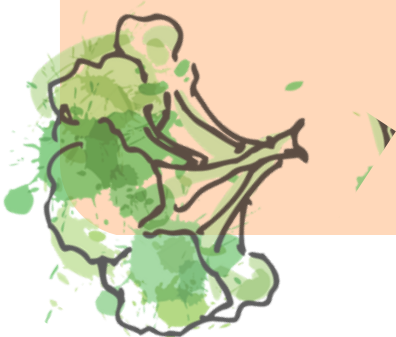
**Q: What time do you wake up every day?**

**A:** I wake up at around 5:50 a.m. to take care of my daughter. On most days, I reach school at about 7:50 a.m. to start work, except for Wednesdays, which are late days.

**Q: What is the most difficult part of your job?**

**A:** It's hardest when I'm working alone because I have to do everything from cutting, cooking, washing to wiping. I'm very particular about wiping the cutlery one by one, which takes a lot of time. Mondays are especially difficult because over the weekend, the trays pile up, sometimes even up to 14 trays, so there's a lot to clean.

F&B overall is also challenging because there is a shortage of manpower. There are limits on hiring, and not enough locals are taking up these jobs, so it becomes more stressful.





# OUR CANTEEN STORY

**Q: What motivates you to continue working?**

**A:** I actually retired in 2019, but I came back to work to stay active and healthy. Having stayed at home for four years, I didn't want to continue that lifestyle. My main motivation is the students because if I'm not here, there won't be food for them.

**Q: Other than hygiene practices, are there any habits you always follow?**

**A:** I always taste the food before serving it. Sometimes it might be too salty or too bland, so I need to check. I make sure everything is safe for the students and I'd rather take the risk myself than serve something not right.

**Q: Do you have a special memory here?**

**A:** Yes, many students greet me every morning with "Hello, Auntie J!" It feels very heartwarming and makes me feel recognised.

**Q: Is there something you want students to know about your role?**

**A:** I'm actually a very sporty person, as I play volleyball, tennis, and I enjoy cycling. I also like singing karaoke.. I also used to sing karaoke, so sometimes on Friday I want to go over to the music booth and sing. I don't mind singing anything so long as it is fun and you have the guts to go and sing for everyone!



# OUR CANTEEN STORY



**Q: What do you enjoy about cooking outside of work?**

**A:** I cook a variety of dishes at home, from Indian to Filipino food. My husband is Punjabi Indian, and I'm Filipino, so I get to explore different dishes.

**Q: Describe your job in three words.**

**A:** Fun, exciting, and delicioso.

**Q: What's something funny or memorable about you?**

**A:** I often joke with students, saying, "I want to give you something..." [only to pull out a finger heart from her pocket ] She laughs, "I feel young when I do this!"

## Fun Facts & Moments

In almost every menu, she includes a braised dish and never misses the chance to say:

"Braise yourself!"

When serving sweet and sour pork, she jokes: "Are you sweet... or sour?" (*pauses with a straight face*)

"Ya lah, you are sour!"

Some students eat char siew every single day, from breakfast to lunch which inspired her to sing:

"Char siew every day, cha cha... char siew every day, ta ta!"

(*to the tune of Black Eyed Peas*)

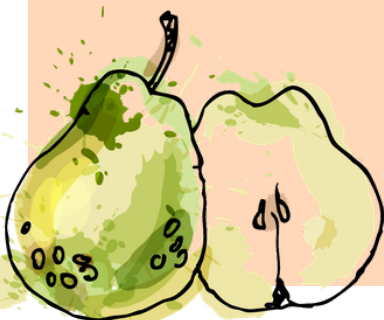


# OUR CANTEEN STORY



*At the end of last term, we got to know a bit more about Chef Raj, who helms our school canteen. This term, we will feature the rest of the canteen staff!*

## MEET UNCLE DANIEL



# OUR CANTEEN STORY



**Q: How has it been working in NUSH?**

**A:** Actually, I started this part time job quite recently, I haven't worked in F&B before, it's very exciting.

**Q: What inspired you to work here?**

**A:** I retired some time ago and didn't work for a period of time and I decided to follow my cousin to work here. I was a mechanical engineer and taught in ITE for 7 years and decided to come here to pass time after I retire. If I just stay at home and do nothing, it affects my health and mental well-being, and I become withdrawn. But if I do a part time job, when I go out, interact with others, it keeps me occupied and time passes faster, making me happy.

**Q: What do you most enjoy about working here?**

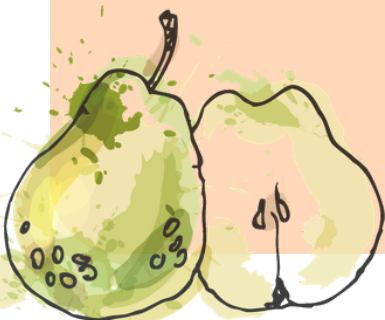
**A:** It's a new experience and I can discover my love and passion for food which drives me.

**Q: Can you describe what a normal day looks like for you?**

**A:** Every day feels normal and routine. I wake up at 6:45am and come over to school to work around 7.30am and leave at 4pm.

**Q: What do you do daily?**

**A:** I sell food at the Daily Special stall, and I'm an assistant in the cookhouse. I don't cook because too many cooks will spoil the broth!



# OUR CANTEEN STORY



**Q: What's your favourite food?**

**A:** Chicken rice, actually I can cook it too because when I was young, I learned how to cook because my mom left me at home and also my experiences in the army developed this skill. I've worked overseas as well, and I love Thai food the most. It's spicy, sour, and sweet!

**Q: What is something students overlook about the canteen food?**

Actually, food is something to judge for yourself. I just come here to work, eat lunch, and then go back home. Honestly, in my opinion the food isn't bad, especially if you compare it to the food outside, it's a lot better. The canteen committee also really helps the students by gathering feedback and passing it on to us in the kitchen so we can make improvements.

**Q: Anything you would like to share about yourself?**

**A:** On my days off, I like to go to the gym, go cycling... and my favourite hobby is flying planes. I fly turbine jets and was even a turbine jet instructor before, teaching NUS students. I can also fly helicopters. I still go flying with my flight club at Labrador Park every week.

I have quite a collection of planes: a Spitfire, a 30cc gasoline, about 12 or 13 in total, one gasoline helicopter, one electric helicopter, and a mini helicopter.



# OUR CANTEEN STORY



**A:** I also race petrol miniature cars every Sunday which I've been doing since primary school! Back then, I used to buy model planes and motorcycles, sometimes even buying individual parts and building them myself.

Right now, my job here at the canteen is more of a part-time thing and the rest of my time is spent on these hobbies. (He smiles gleefully as he shows us photos of the turbine jets he flies every week.)

**Q: Anything else you'd like students to know?**

**A:** If anyone wants some guidance or experience with flying, feel free to contact me, I'm happy to help!

*While we were conducting the interview, an iguana appeared in the kitchen and he immediately ran up to the corner and helped catch it, and even told us that he used to catch snakes in his army days, so it wasn't too scary for him! Speaking with Auntie Jennie and Uncle Daniel revealed the warmth behind canteen counters. Both were friendly and approachable, whether through Auntie Jennie's cheerful presence or Uncle Daniel's infectious enthusiasm, bringing joy into our meals.*



# OUR CANTEEN STORY



*This section features interviews with Mr Justin and Mr David who work behind the scenes in the school canteen, offering insight into their daily routines, challenges, and all they do to keep the canteen running daily.*

## MEET MR JUSTIN



# OUR CANTEEN STORY



**Q: Can you describe what a normal day would look like for you?**

**A:** A normal day starts quite early. I'll come in and brief the team. Once service starts, it's quite fast-paced – managing the food line, making sure portions and quality are consistent, and handling any issues that come up with the administrative side of things.

**Q: How has your experience in NUSH be so far?**

**A:** It's been quite meaningful and there's a good environment here overall. Of course, there are challenges, especially during peak hours, but it's rewarding to see things run smoothly and students enjoying the food.

**Q: What do you enjoy most about working at NUSH?**

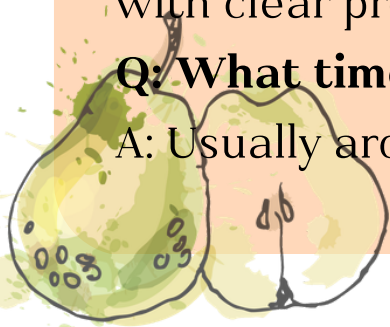
**A:** The interaction with students. Even small things like a “thank you” or feedback makes the job more rewarding.

**Q: Do you have previous experience in schools or in canteen? If so, how is NUSH similar/different to these experiences?**

**A:** I don't have prior experience working in a school or canteen. I was previously in the civil service. In some ways, it's similar to NUSH as there is a structured environment with clear processes and expectations.

**Q: What time do you wake up everyday?**

**A:** Usually around 6am to prepare for the day.





# OUR CANTEEN STORY

**Q: What is the most challenging aspect of your role?**

**A:** Handling peak hour demand. There is limited time with many students, so everything has to be fast while still maintaining quality and hygiene.

**Q: Can you share one special memory from NUSH?**

**A:** Students coming back to say they enjoyed the food. It may seem like a small remark, but it means a lot to us.

**Q: What is something you want more students to know about your role?**

**A:** There is a lot of work behind the scenes, from preparation to planning. It is not just about cooking during lunch time.

**Q: What is one thing students often overlook or don't know about the work that goes into the canteen food?**

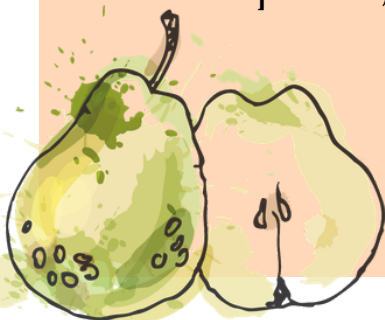
**A:** That there are real people working behind the scenes trying their best every day. It's not just food – there's effort and responsibility involved in serving everyone safely and on time.

**Q: What are some practices you abide by in the kitchen?**

**A:** Hygiene is very important – proper food handling and cleanliness. We also focus on consistency so students get the same quality every day.

**Q: Can you describe your job in three words?**

**A:** Fast-paced, responsible, fulfilling.

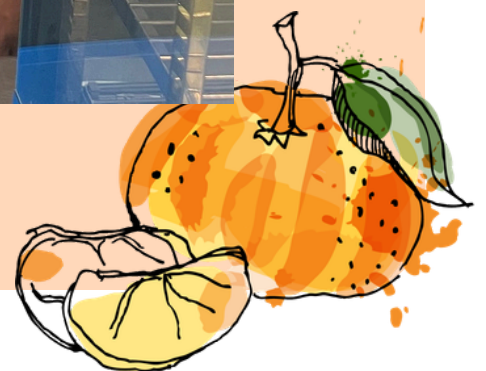


# OUR CANTEEN STORY



*This section features interviews with Mr Justin and Mr David who work behind the scenes in the school canteen, offering insight into their daily routines, challenges, and all they do to keep the canteen running daily.*

## MEET MR DAVID



# OUR CANTEEN STORY



**Q: Can you describe what a normal day looks like for you?**

**A:** I wake up at 7am and check on all the movements for the morning, firstly I'll reach NUSH to check on breakfast, prep lunch and get ready for service, after lunch, I go over to Bukit Batok and check on catering ops.

**Q: How has your experience in NUSH be so far?**

**A:** It's been amazing to say the least, we started with the café, and started with bentos before moving into the kitchen. We have really come so far and the best is yet to come.

**Q: What do you enjoy most about working at NUSH?**

**A:** Interaction with the students and trying our best to give the best value in terms of service and food.

**Q: Do you have previous experience in schools or in canteen? If so, how is NUSH similar/different to these experiences?**

**A:** Yes, previously I worked in an international school. I would say there's a fair bit of difference in terms of timing of when kids come down for recess or lunch break or the price point of the food and even the health ratings of food restrict us which makes us really focus on service and food taste



# OUR CANTEEN STORY



**Q: What is the most challenging aspect of your role?**

**A:** To balance price point of supplies against food taste, school's expectations and not disappointing students.

**Q: Can you share one special memory about NUSH?**

**A:** Open House where the student volunteers were so helpful and really went all out to help us to move rations and top up drinks to keep up with the demand.

**Q: What is something you want more students to know about your role?**

**A:** That we are here to give the best value for their money and best taste and we are here in person to address any issues they might have should any item fall short of their expectations.

**Q: What is one thing students often overlook or don't know about the work that goes into the canteen food?**

**A:** The portions may look small due to the plate size but we always stick to the guidelines set out by Ministry of Education for portion size and prices.

**Q: What are some practices you abide by in the kitchen?**

**A:** Firstly, washing of hands before service, and hair nets for long hair that you can see the aunties wearing, finally maintaining the temperature of food in accordance to SFA guidelines.

**Q: Can you describe your job in three words?**

**A:** Tiring, fast-paced, rewarding.





# OUR CANTEEN STORY

*Speaking with Mr Justin and Mr David revealed the work that goes on behind the canteen counters, from the responsibly and care involved, to managing busy service hours to maintain food quality, ensuring that students are well-served. We will feature the cafe aunties next semester, see you then!*

