

## The Artisans: Exclusive Baking Institute

Written by Valala Menon

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Lisa Isaac and Jaya Uday are a wonderful duo – they are into an entrepreneurial venture - an exclusive baking institute The Artisans, first of its kind in Chennai. The most intriguing aspect about this is that Jaya is Lisa's student dating back to Lisa's baking instructor days at Asan Memorial college Chennai. Lisa Isaac is a warm person full of bubbling energy. She was teaching in Asan Memorial College Chennai as baking instructor and both Jaya and her husband Uday Nair were her students.

'My brush with baking started at IHM Mumbai (Institute of Hotel Management). My first job was with US Wheat Foundation, from where I ultimately moved to Asan and continued to be the baking instructor for a decade'' says Lisa.

After resigning from Asan, her next stint was with Hot Breads as training manager for five years. She took a break from work in 2007 and used to freelance as a soft skill trainer but her passion had always been baking and Jaya and her husband Uday suggested that she start her own training institute. Initially Lisa was very apprehensive about it. Jaya agreed to partner with Lisa and thus, Artisans was born. Jaya has always been taking up orders from home and is well into home catering.

'We want to train home makers and aspiring students who might be interested to learn baking. People who are already adept at baking too can enroll here and we can help them to upgrade their skills. Every individual should be able to do their own baking instead of watching the instructors bake. Each student will have their own space and oven to bake-' explains Lisa.

Lisa teaches around five to six varieties each day. The timings are from 10-5. All materials for baking are provided to the students.

There are different levels at which students are trained and they are allocated into different batches. 'We have designed a specific agenda for each day of the week. Mondays are devoted to short crust baking, Tuesdays for tarts and pies. Wednesdays are for different variations of cakes. Thursdays for desserts, and Fridays for bread rolls and yeast products.'

For each category, they have five recipes each which are taught. The courses are very flexible. Per day charge for any category is just Rs 500.

'When the students are satisfied with their first level coaching, they can opt for higher levels. It is customized according to their choice. Those who are already professional bakers or caterers come in on evenings or late afternoons. They are open on Saturdays too to work with small batches of five to ten people at the most. In the long run, the students get much needed expertise in catering to bulk orders for their own clients.'

Advanced levels of baking include chocolate making, advanced icing techniques, food creativity. Jaya and Lisa are planning to associate with clubs in and around the city and offer to conduct courses which are customized according to the preferences of the members. Their future plans include associating with schools and offering to teach basic baking techniques on weekends or on vacations. Many schools have approached them to start creative cookery clubs in their institutions.

Jaya Uday had been interested in entrepreneurial ventures right from the start. She has been catering to orders from home and her specialities are pasta, continentals, puddings and desserts.

'I specialize in health cakes- fruit cakes, pumpkin cakes, potato cakes, potato choc cakes, zucchini cakes, carrot cakes etc....' smiles Jaya. Jaya takes in orders for three to four parties in a week. She is much sought after for her roast chicken, pasta, salad and mousse. She has been featured in Rashmi Uday Singh's column when the latter came out with a home catering issue. Jaya puts in all efforts single handedly and seeks no outside help. Both Jaya and Lisa aspire to create jobs for the economically deprived women of the society. 'we look upon this as a social responsibility' affirms both of them.

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