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Haven's new batch of trainees looking forward to the year ahead. NICKY SULLIVAN

Haven reopens after a three-week break

Sat, 27 September 2014 Nicky Sullivan

Fresh faces and fresh new vegetarian options were on the menu when training restaurant Haven reopened its doors on Thursday night, following a three-week closure to allow for the transition from last year's graduates to this year's intake of new trainees.

Eleven young recruits, selected from organisations in Siem Reap, have already begun learning about everything from microbiology to recycling as part of their preparation for their new positions.

In addition to on-the-job training, the new students will receive support from last year's graduates who have been placed in three-month internships, but will stay on at the trainees' house as mentors for the freshers.

This is a confidence boost for the seven students who made it through last year's training program at Haven, and also helps smooth their path to independence.

"They will always have our support, but they're not being popped out of the Haven bubble quite so suddenly now," said Sara Wallimann, a Haven founder.

"And they have become the teachers. I think they've grown in just the last few weeks because they're the older ones who know how everything works."

The graduates have been placed in Mie Café, Tangram Garden, Mamma Shop, Kaya Café and the Park Hyatt.

Haven worked with restaurants and hotels in town, and the students were able to select which venues they really wanted to work for, helping to ensure a match between their ambitions and their work.

Sara says graduate Siyuan said she really wanted to learn how to make pasta.

"We always said that she was just like an Italian mamma, and now she's in Mamma Shop," noted Sara. "And Sorl, who is now in Mie Café, is just in the perfect place."

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She has always been the most eager and she's so passionate about what she does."

Among the new dishes on the menu, a vegetable-ginger-tofu is a definite dish to go for, according to Sara.

She also raved about the roasted eggplant and pickled beet sandwich, and a new pasta primavera which is based on a home-made pesto of holy basil, sun-dried tomato and cashews.

Haven is now open for lunch and dinner as usual.

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