

Diary of a Master florist in the Making

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Today I am heading off to the British Academy of Floral art (BAFA), Dunchieoak Barton, Devon, with a new note book in hand, my tool box and buckets of flowers.

Nothing new for me as I am incredibly privileged to be part of the amazing group of Florists, who I consider to be my friends, mentors, confidantes and who make up the tutor team at the BAFA. However today I am going as a student, rather than a tutor.

I am excited and slightly daunted to be embarking on the final stage of my floristry qualifications to become a British Master florist, a journey which started some 15 years ago. For those of you who don't know there are 5 levels of floristry qualifications and over the last 15 years I have worked through levels 1-4 and I now embark on the final stage which will take me aprox 18 – 24 months and earn me the title of British Master Florist. To go alongside the prestigious title of AIFD the USA equivalent which I earned in 2016.



Many florists ask the big question 'why' to be perfectly honest with you I totally understand the question. In a job where most are working incredibly hard to provide beautiful flowers for clients, against stiff competition, and customers who struggle to understand the value of our work, it's a very good question. For me the answer is simple, I want to be the best florist I can be, and being trained by one of the most amazing florists in the UK Tina Parkes, British, Dutch and American master florist means that my mind and skills will be stretched

to amazing lengths, but more than that I believe that British florists need to show that we are a profession to be reckoned with.

The profession is made up of largely female (although we also have some amazingly talented male colleagues) entrepreneurs who juggle running a business, problem solving, bookkeeping, marketing, managing staff, being creative and alongside this often running a home and family life. Despite this trained professional florists manage to pull off the seemingly impossible task of producing beautiful creations, to help with celebrations and sad goodbyes, and yet the profession is often not taken seriously. We are considered to be 'nice ladies/men who do flowers' and I am often told how lovely it must be to 'play with flowers all day'. In pursuing professional qualifications and shouting from the roof tops about our profession we can change this perception.

So our first lesson begins in this beautiful idyllic setting which can't fail to inspire you. I greet my fellow students, some old friends who I have studied level 3 and 4 with and some new additions to the Academy family.



The qualification is broken down into units, this enables students who want to do part of the course for their own professional development to join us without feeling the pressure to complete the whole qualification. The unit we are starting with is Demonstrations and presentations unit which is very exciting as I love demonstrating to flower clubs, and running workshops, as well as teaching as a tutor for the Academy, so this is part of my day to day routine, but it's great to be able to step away from the work and take a good look at it from the other side and see how I can improve. I can't wait to tell you about our next lesson in October, time to plan my designs which will be inspired by the season so the first one is called Harvest Festival with a handmade straw bale, fruits berries and foraged finds.



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