

## An Acai Affair co-founders seen as easy target due to young age

Despite being only 20, Miss Isabel Lee and Miss Anna Ng took a leap of faith and launched their acai (pronounced ah-sigh-ee) bowl business in December 2016.

An acai bowl is a Brazilian dish made of mashed acai palm fruit, mixed with granola, fruits and guarana syrup.

Starting with one outlet in Katong, An Acai Affair expanded last year with outlets in Bugis, Upper Thomson and Westgate. A fifth outlet will open this year at Jewel Changi Airport.

For Miss Lee, now 23 and a student at Singapore Management University, a desire to avoid a regular office job spurred her on to becoming an

entrepreneur.

She told The New Paper: "To me, success means being able to do what you like and make a living out of it."

"Anna and I both graduate this year, and it is exciting because this is going to become our full-time job."

Originally concerned her business plans would affect her studies, Miss Lee's parents have since changed their minds.

"They are resigned to me doing this full-time now," Miss Lee said with a laugh.

She is grateful to her parents for giving her advice on business management.

Arguably the biggest hurdle Miss Lee and Miss Ng have



(From left) An Acai Affair co-founders Anna Ng and Isabel Lee. One of the acai bowls their business serves. PHOTOS: AN ACAI AFFAIR



faceted was being seen as an easy target due to their age.

"Contractors and suppliers tried to charge higher prices, which we thankfully had the knowledge to negotiate down," Miss Lee reflected.

"They didn't take us seri-

ously as they couldn't believe that we were the bosses."

However, Miss Lee noted the positive side of her youth too, saying it makes it easier for her employees to bond with them.

Friends have played a key role in An Acai Affair's success.

"(They) helped us paint the walls, moved furniture into our new outlets and promoted us on social media."

While all of their outlets are profitable, the flagship store at Katong remains the most popular. On average, the store serves 150 bowls a day.

While expansion has been speedy, Miss Lee does not take success for granted.

She said: "We are happy to expand, but this also brings more stress."

The duo constantly look at how to innovate.

"Progress means going out of your comfort zone. That is what it takes to improve and grow."

-JASMINE LIM