



Ricky Liu's concoctions have won him awards, including the highly coveted Hong Kong's best bartender award at the World Class Bartender of the Year competition in May (below). Liu will now represent the city against bartenders from more than 50 countries at the world finals in July.

Photo: Berton Chang

A glass act

At just 26, Ricky Liu is already a key figure in HK bar culture, writes **Wong Yat-hei**

GAME-CHANGERS

When Ricky Liu told his family he wanted to drop out of design school to become a bartender at the age of 18, they couldn't understand his decision. "My parents were not at all supportive of the idea," he says. "They did not think of bartending as a career; they thought I would waste my time getting drunk."

But Liu soon proved that bartending is serious business and now, at just 26, he is one of the

strongest influences on Hong Kong drinking culture.

After five years' bartending experience in Australia, Liu brought back an abundance of knowledge to help bar owners refine their operations, train bartenders and design menus.

"I have been hired as a consultant by several bars to help improve their operations. I also do bartending work at Wyndham the 4th on Wyndham Street. I love it so much - meeting new people, catching up with friends, creating new drinks, refining classics," he says.

In May this year, Liu was crowned Hong Kong's best bartender

at the city's World Class Bartender of the Year final. He will go on to represent the city against bartenders from more than 50 countries at the World Class Global Final in July.

Liu attributes his success to two teachers at the Golden Monkey, a legendary bar in Melbourne.

"Golden Monkey was where my career took off," he says. "I had the chance to learn from Misty Hoeta, who I call the mother of my career. Her creativity with flavours is amazing. Can you believe she put peanut butter in a cocktail? She made it work beautifully," he says.

When Hoeta left, Liu met Chris Stock, who challenged him to take his craft to a new level. "Chris has OCD [obsessive-compulsive disorder]. He needs everything to be perfect. He once spent three months developing a raspberry syrup because he thought the one from the supplier was not good enough. He pushed me to do my best and is my role model," Liu says.

His career took another step forward when he won a regional World Class competition and caught the attention of bar owners in Hong Kong. "I got lots of calls from bars asking me to work for them, and finally I decided to accept an offer," he says.

Away from Hong Kong since he was 10, the first place he visited was Lan Kwai Fong to check out the local drinking culture. "I was very disappointed. There was no cocktail culture. I wanted to order an old-fashioned drink but I could not find it on any menu," he says.

Establishing a cocktail culture in Hong Kong was his first mission and he put his practical knowledge to use. "I was surprised how quickly the culture developed. Hong Kong has gone from having no premium cocktail bar to having more than 10 in Central. The pace at which cocktails have grown in popularity is remarkable," he says.

Although Liu enjoys bartending, he is not much of a drinker. "I don't drink a lot, but I do taste a lot of drinks," he says. "As a bartender, it is my job to taste and smell everything. I will chew a bar of soap or a wire so I know how they taste. Having a sensitive sense of smell and taste is important."



Photo: Ricky Liu

LIAU'S 10-YEAR BUCKET LIST

GO GLOBAL Win the World Class Global Final next month against bartenders from more than 50 countries

BAR CRAWL Open his own bar

STAY COOL Expand his ice-sculpture business

DOMESTIC FRONT Start a family and have two children

RIGHT MIX Contribute more to Hong Kong's drinks industry by training more high-quality bartenders



For the full interview, go to www.classifiedpost.com/gamechangers

CAREER GUIDE

A notice of intent

Upon securing a new position, it is likely you will still have to serve a notice period with your current employer. Sometimes, the notice period can be lengthy, so it is important to maintain contact with your new employer throughout.

The new employer will usually try and contact you a couple of times during this period, but there is certainly nothing wrong with maintaining more regular contact with them. You could grab a coffee with your new supervisor and get to know them better. Some companies even invite new employees to team social events so they can get to know their new colleagues.

Having this type of contact with the new company sends them the message that you are keen to get to work and build relationships with the people you will be working with. It can also calm any second thoughts you may have about your decision. Speaking to your new colleagues and getting to know your supervisor before your start can help reduce your nerves. Day one of the new job is also a less daunting prospect if you know some of the team already.

There are a couple of other things that you can do to ensure you start out on the right foot. While we do not advocate starting any projects for your new employer during your notice period, it does serve as an excellent time to review company history and other



Day one of a job is less daunting if you already know the team

general information about your new company. Requesting this kind of information from your new supervisor tells them you are interested and enthusiastic about your new role.

Walter Ellicott, managing director, Ellicott Long Limited, recruiting professionals for the property and construction industries in Asia

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Matthew Durham

Winston & Strawn
Durham joins Winston & Strawn's Shanghai office as a partner in its labour and employment practice. He was formerly a partner with Clyde & Co, where he was head of the employment team for mainland China and Hong Kong. "[Durham's] extensive experience with labour-law issues in China is a welcome addition to the firm," says Bertrand Theaud, managing partner of the Shanghai office.



Scott Greenberg

BlackRock
Greenberg joins BlackRock as Asia-Pacific head of global capital markets (GCM), based in Hong Kong. "[Greenberg] has a tremendous track record in the industry and this will provide BlackRock with unique insight into deciding the investor viewpoint as we look to deploy capital into GCM-sourced opportunities in Asia's capital markets," says Marc Desmidt, Asia-Pacific head of alpha strategies.



Guy Parsonage

Fluid
The former managing director of Jack Morton Worldwide, Parsonage joins Fluid as CEO, bringing over a decade of global agency experience gathered in Europe, Australia, and Hong Kong. "[Parsonage's] long-standing in Hong Kong will be an invaluable asset as we drive Fluid forward this year and launch the next stage of growth for the company," says Fluid co-founder Simon Squibb.

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CAREER DOCTORS

An honest résumé boosts job chances

I graduated in 2010 with a bachelor of commerce degree (majoring in accounting and finance) in Australia. I then came to Hong Kong but failed to find a job in accounting or auditing. I'm still trying to break into the sector but have no relevant experience. Can you help? Also,

should I still include non-related work experience or education on my résumé? Prior to my degree, I finished high school and completed a diploma of medicine degree in China, but I worry as it was so long ago and is irrelevant to accounting. Anne

Even though you graduated three years ago and still don't have work experience in the accounting field, you can still find an entry-level role - but you will need to move quickly. Leaving it longer will make it a lot harder.

First, enrol on either the ACCA or CPA Hong Kong qualification programme. This will show commitment to your chosen career and give prospective employers comfort.

Next, you must start applying to firms directly. There are three types of generic jobs I would advise you to look at: audit roles, in-house financial accountant

positions, and jobs at external accounting service providers such as Tricor. Don't just focus on large companies; approach small and medium-sized ones too.

If you are a Chinese national, this can be a unique selling point for some firms, given your language ability and knowledge of China. Some audit firms will allow you to be based in Hong Kong to travel to China for audit work. Firms like ShineWing would be worth approaching.

I would not miss anything out on your résumé. You must include work experience since 2010, as well as your high school and diploma in China. Gaps raise questions and make the reader feel you may be hiding something. Transparency is always the best policy.

Richard Letcher, co-founder and managing director of Profile Search & Selection, has 19 years of recruitment experience in the UK, Australia and Asia markets.



For the full story, go to www.classifiedpost.com/careerdoctors

Best way to decline an offer

I am a fresh graduate who has been fortunate enough to get two job offers. I have decided which one to take but am not quite sure when and how to decline the other. I know I should let them know as soon as possible, but it could be my back-up if anything happens with the other job. When is the best time to do it? Also, I plan to turn down the offer by e-mail, thanking them for the opportunity and letting them know how much I

value it so I don't close doors on future opportunities. Should I give the real reason I'm declining the offer? Kevin

It is important to handle this situation well and avoid closing doors on future opportunities. I do not recommend sending the rejection by e-mail. Call both the hiring manager and the human resource contact directly. They may be annoyed or upset, but will respect your courage in speaking to them directly. If you cannot reach them, send an e-mail.

Remember that a phone conversation is no different than in person. Your feelings, appearance and energy level will all be felt by the recipient. Telephone from a quiet place and mentally prepare. Confirm that this is a good time to speak, and if not, reschedule.

How will you respond if asked why you have chosen another offer, or if there is a counter-offer? Is money a factor? If not, do not respond to an offer of a higher salary or discuss a counter-offer if you would not take it.

I don't advise stringing the other offer along as a safety net once you have signed a contract. If you reject the offer at a very late stage, you risk leaving a bad opinion of your professionalism.

Consider staying in touch every six months. One day you may work for them, or they may be your client or vendor.

Debbie Matson is managing director of Links International. With a strong regional presence in China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Macau, Links International provides recruitment, payroll and HR services.



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