Maya
TRACE Student Spotlight Story
By Mike Reynolds

Meet superstar TRACE student Maya! Maya is the quintessential go-getter who has made remarkable progress towards her college and career goals. Although Maya loved taking Chemistry back in high school, she wasn’t exactly sure how measuring and mixing chemicals would translate into a career. That was until she took her measuring and mixing skills to a Culinary Arts class through the Career Technical Education Equity Program (CTEEP) at TRACE.

Maya began her culinary journey under CTE instructor Chef Justin Halbert at Garfield Culinary, a highly touted program that has won multiple Teen Iron Chef competitions. Despite the challenges of learning culinary online due to the pandemic, Maya first fell in love with making gourmet salads. Not only did Maya enjoy preparing a variety of leafy green concoctions, but she also loved the artistic aspects of creating mixed salads that popped with a variety of colors, textures, and shapes.

The following year Maya attended Morse Culinary, home of the Hungry Tiger café, a student-run “white tablecloth” full-service restaurant that is open daily on campus. Although she was “a little intimidated at first,” under the direction of highly esteemed CTE instructor Chef Sara Smith, Maya quickly adapted to working in the kitchen where she became proficient with industrial ovens, meat slicers, and deep fryers among other “professional grade” equipment. With the help of Mr. Tommy Hiller, TRACE Transition Teacher, Maya began applying to restaurant and deli jobs around her local community. The owner of Which Wich (a delicatessen in the San Diego Area) was very impressed with Maya’s culinary skills and offered her a job.

Maya is becoming an integral member of the Which Wich team, reporting to work at 9:00 AM two days a week to prepare a variety of meats, vegetables, and bread for the 11:00 AM store opening. Maya continues to attend culinary arts and basic skills classes on her non-workdays as she pursues her next big goal of... working in a bakeshop!