



runs, can – a testament to her belief that no one group should have a monopoly over what restaurants and cooking should be.

Everyone who comes to work at her restaurant, Julie's Kopitiam, is taught the same way she was: through watching, following, tasting and feeling, rather than reading and writing down rules and recipes. It is a 'feminine' approach, she acknowledges – but as her mum always told her, 'it makes you more confident in the kitchen. You know you can do these things with these ingredients, and what you can substitute if you don't have them.' Besides, in a small, 'cupboard-sized' kitchen like that of Kopitiam – which occupies the ground floor of a townhouse – it's essential that everyone can do everything.

'In Asian restaurants you don't really have the same hierarchal model you do in restaurants in Europe,' Lin continues. 'Everyone can do the pass, the front of house and the back of house, the chopping and the washing up.' It's a model that makes for a healthier working environment – friendly, collaborative, with a sense of shared responsibility – but it is also inherently more inclusive, says Lin, enabling her to offer employment and experience to people new to the industry.

There's no denying that Britain's restaurant scene has a diversity problem. Though there are plenty of people from ethnic minority groups working as pot washers and kitchen porters, there are depressingly few in senior positions. By taking people on who might not have had the opportunity, time or money for formal chef's training, Lin hopes to 'encourage diversity, and create a new generation of chefs that can work in a different way'.

'It takes longer to train people like that, but I think the outcome is worth it – because that way

you get independent cooks, who bounce ideas off each other. They can adapt a template,' she continues, 'but they don't have to be exact. They aren't chained to a recipe.' Though she had been encouraged to put on Malaysian specials in her first chef's job, at a top Glasgow restaurant, it was while working at an Indian street-food place that she realised what she calls 'estimation cooking' could have a serious economic value, outside of the domestic sphere.

Indeed, the approach is part and parcel of cuisines across Southeast Asia – because 'you can't regiment that style of cooking. The strength of each batch of curry paste is always different depending on where your ingredients come from – and you need to taste as you go because it's very difficult to fix once you've finished.' Emboldened by her experiences at the Indian restaurant, and by the popularity of the Malaysian street-food stall she ran part time, in 2017 she moved into bricks and mortar.

Today Lin counts herself lucky. Kopitiam is based in 'an extremely welcoming and multicultural area of Glasgow, and we have a nice, friendly kitchen. We do get a lot of people who haven't been chefs before.' Yet her passion for inclusivity and equality is by no means confined to her kitchen. 'There is a culture of machismo and fear that still exists in the industry – that is normalised. I want to talk about it.' Not content with simply ploughing her own path, she regularly champions the work of people in food 'who are fighting that culture', through interviews, collaborations, recommendations and events. 'Because if you have a group of chefs creating a different style of kitchen standing together and shouting about it, then you can create a movement. You can be the change.'