

SAI KUNG'S WONDER WOMEN

Nicole Slater meets five inspiring women making their mark on the town this International Women's Day.

Photography by Graham Uden.



Mojdeh Kazemi

Founder of Tala's Hair and Beauty

After being offered a job in Clearwater Bay, 25 years ago, Moj fell in love with the town and opened her own salon, Tala's back in 1999. Since then the hair and beauty centre has become a staple in the community, with many residents lining up for an appointment. Her professionalism and friendly character has helped her become the talk of the town ever since! talashair.com

How has the beauty industry embraced women?

I'm lucky to have never faced any challenges due to my gender in this industry. I had an amazing boss, Jean Pierre in California and now I own my business, I make the decisions.

What changes would you like to see for women in the future?

I would like to see women and men treated equally, in every aspect of their lives, especially when it comes to equal pay.

What advice do you have for aspiring young women?

Stay focused, strong and be passionate about what you do. Being in a career that I love passionately has helped me to excel in what I do.

Who is your biggest inspiration?

My father. His strength and his passion for life and family, has guided me through some of the toughest times in my life. In times of need I still hear his voice.

Faye Bradley

Founder of Cha Siu Papers

In-between finishing university and starting a full-time job, Faye decided to test her business idea, Cha Siu Papers. Little did she know that her quirky Hong Kong-themed greeting cards would be such a hit. She has since expanded to accessories and personalised cards with many of her designs reflecting on her time growing up in Sai Kung. chasiupapers.com

What advice do you have for people wanting to start a business?

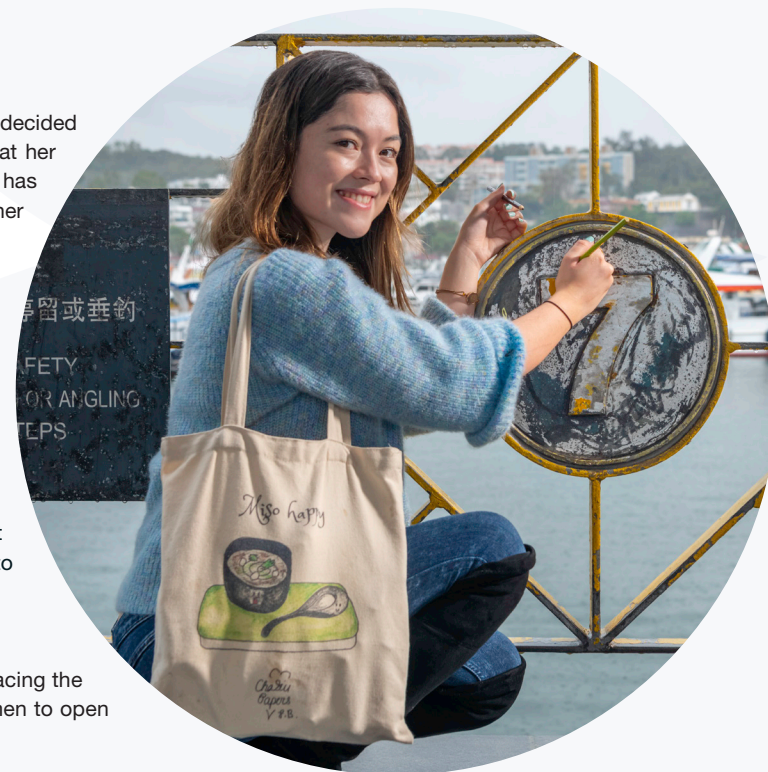
Go out there and make contacts. There are a lot of people in Hong Kong who are willing to help and might be in a similar position to you. Feedback won't always be what you want to hear - it's all part of the learning process.

Have you faced any challenges as a young woman in business?

Sometimes people don't take me or my work seriously. It's easy to get taken advantage of, especially as I am relatively young. I've learned to be aware and recognise when I'm wasting my time.

How do you think times are changing for business women?

Gender stereotypes are long demolished and generations are embracing the change but it takes time. I'd like to see more opportunities for women to open up and of course equal pay.



Ally van de Pol

Founder and coach at Dragon Fitness and Coaching

As a fitness coach and lover of the great outdoors, Ally has always been a country girl at heart. She moved to Sai Kung six years ago on a mission to encourage residents to lead healthier lifestyles. Through fitness training and nutrition coaching, Ally has helped many live fuller happier and healthier lives. dragonfitnessandcoaching.com

How has the fitness industry welcomed women?

Often, women prefer to train or consult with other women. Men also like to train with me because they can leave their ego at the door and there is no judgement.

What is your proudest moment?

When I read a lovely testimonial about how my work has positively affected a client's life. This is the stuff that brings me to tears. I'm also really proud to be in a position to influence people to eat more healthily and suggest plant-based alternatives.

What changes would you like to see for women in the fitness industry?

For strength training to become a normal part of a women's fitness regime, just as it is for men. Many women are intimidated about going into the weights room or fear getting 'bulky'.



Catherine Lumsden

Founder of Catherine's Puppies

After moving to Sai Kung ten years ago, Catherine wanted to make a difference. Her passion for animal welfare led her to help the stray dogs in the town and she set up her own rescue shelter Catherine's Puppies in 2015. Whilst every rescue is a miracle, it can take its toll and consume other elements of her life, but with the occasional moment to breathe, Catherine's on a mission to save Sai Kung's strays, one puppy at a time.

Facebook: Catherine's Puppies

What is your definition of success?

For me, being asked for my opinion on this means that I must be doing something right! When I educate younger generations about animal welfare and they are keen to get involved and volunteer, I consider that a success.

How do rescue cases affect those around you?

In my experience, my male friends are actually more emotional and struggle a lot more seeing some of the rescue cases that come in, more so than my female friends. Women tend to just 'get on with it'.

What advice do you have for aspiring women?

Easy really, just do what makes you happy and use your strengths to your advantage. Surround yourself with people who bring out the best in you and support you, both in times of success and failure.



Kim Minards

Co-founder of Enoteca Group

Coming to Hong Kong as a backpacker, the restaurant lifestyle found Kim. She started as a waitress with an F&B management company, ironically owned and managed by women. After learning the ropes, she took a leap in 2005 and started Enoteca Group with her husband Rob Cooper. The couple have lived in Clearwater Bay for seven years and opened The Conservatory in the square in 2017. enotecagroup.com


What is your proudest moment?

I am immensely proud of our first restaurant Enoteca in Soho. On the first night we were fully booked and I remember thinking "OMG! They love it!" But all of this pales in comparison to bringing home my children Jack and Summer, I am so proud to be a mother.

What changes would you like to see for women in the future?

The thing I feel most guilty about is spending time away from my children. Every working woman has the same sense of guilt. It would be great if more companies could allow flexible working options for mothers.

What advice do you have for aspiring young women?

Be prepared to do the worst job with the most enthusiasm. People can only respect you if they know you are willing to do it yourself. If they respect you, they will follow you, wherever you lead. 



Need some more inspiration?

Check out our sister magazine Expat Parent where we met nine inspiring women from a range of industries across Hong Kong, including Indigo Living's CEO Tracy Fitzpatrick and Founder and executive director of Premiere Performances of Hong Kong, Andrea Fessler. Pick up a copy at many local businesses around the town or find us online at hongkongliving.com