

Emily Goldfischer · 24 minutes ago · 7 min read

## Soaring Sweetly: Leyre Pedrazuela, Executive Pastry Chef, Shangri-la The Shard, London

[Leyre Pedrazuela](#) has scaled some amazing heights in her career, and she's not even 30! She's worked in some of the world's most celebrated hotel kitchens, including Mandarin Oriental, Pennyhill Park, and South Lodge, restaurants such as Park Row London, and pastry shops including Ladurée, Madrid's Mama Framboise, and Escribà in Barcelona. Already a seasoned competitor, Leyre has participated in national and international pastry shows including [Belgium's Chocolatier of the Year](#) and appeared on TV in the UK's [Bake Off: The Professionals](#). And recently she's been tapped to lead the pastry team at the five-star [Shangri-la The Shard, London](#)—the tallest building in Europe—and is about to release her first cookbook. Girl has got it going ON, we chat with Leyre to find out how she does it.



### So many accomplishments and you're still so young, how did you get into cooking and specifically pastry?

I've always loved cooking, ever since I was a child. I used to bake with my mom every weekend but never was interested in the kitchen, only baking. I am a very creative person and love the science behind the ingredients we use in the pastry kitchen. When I was 16, I decided to join the culinary school and it was the best thing I ever did. I've enjoyed every day of my career since then.

### What brought you to England?

The first time I visited England was in 2012. I happened to meet someone in Spain who had worked at Ladurée in London and they offered me a 2-week apprenticeship in August, and so I did. Three months later, they called to offer me a permanent job. I never doubted myself, I immediately packed my bags, left everything in Madrid, and moved to London within the next week.

### What are the personality traits that make for a great pastry chef?

Creativity, an eagerness to learn, and an obsession for organization and things being done well. These three are essential for success within the pastry industry.

**You've been in a few culinary competitions, what do you like about competing?**

If I'm being honest, I don't really enjoy competing, but I believe it's one of the things you do to improve yourself and to learn from other competitors too. Sometimes you only get the best out of yourself when you are working under pressure, and the feeling of satisfaction when you finish the competition, looking back in what you achieved makes it worth it.

**What was Bake Off like?**

Hard, very hard. To date, I'm still not quite sure how much I loved it. TV shows are not reality. I have such a passion for this profession, and it was difficult balancing my methods of quality care and doing things properly with the demands of the show and drama. I think this profession is tough and there should be more respect for all the professionals who spend their whole lives dedicated to perfecting the art.

**You've worked in the countryside and now the most spectacular city hotel, what is the biggest difference between city and country clientele?**

I think the clientele is very similar, but when you work in a luxury hotel there are a lot of high-profile guests who want to be spoiled. They come to experience the best quality and creative food, and that's what I do.

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Probably the biggest difference is the pace. Countryside hotels are more relaxed, guests are in less of a rush and they take more time to enjoy. City hotels are much more demanding. Guests are a bit more hurried, and we can receive very last-minute bookings. We always need to be prepared for anyone who might come through the door and also have an open mind, ready to adapt. They expect to have a luxurious and bespoke experience, but perhaps within a smaller time frame.



Leyre's impressive Afternoon Tea spread at Shangri-la The Shard, London

**The new architectural tea/skyline pastries look amazing—what inspired you?**

The idea was presented to me at the very beginning of my Shangri-La journey, it was originally an idea from Kurt, the General Manager, as we had discussed skyline-related structures to fit with the hotel's architectural theme. At first, I struggled as I wanted to ensure we would not compromise the quality of the food and fresh ingredients over design. My initial thought was that I could make each pastry in the shape of a different iconic landmark using custom molds. It would have involved a lot of mousses, colorings, and setting agents to make this work.

My next thought was to make just a very high-quality afternoon tea, where I could play with having mousses, tarts, layered cakes, sponges, and creams for varied textures; each of these with a story behind them. The show-stopping realistic miniature chocolate and raspberry Shard finishes off the tea experience.

My hope is that guests will enjoy the balance between high end, natural patisserie and a more innovative, modern piece which for this year, I have chosen to be The Shard in which we are located. With the dry ice experience, the feeling of having afternoon tea in the clouds will be real... or at least, I will try to convey this as they are taking a bite!

**How do you come up with pastry recipes in general? Which comes first the look or the taste?**

The taste always. I would never compromise the taste of a pastry over aesthetics. I first work on the taste, texture, and balance. When I'm happy with the result, I explore ways to make the new invention look beautiful. The first impression that the guest has will be with sight, so this must be a consideration, but if the taste does not live up to the appearance, then this is ultimately the most disappointing. If guests love the taste, they will enjoy every bite and leave with good memories from their visit.



mouth watering pastries inspired by The Shard

**When doing a pastry tea menu, how do you decide on the different pastries and flavors?**

I'm very conscious that having an afternoon tea can be very filling, and there are many sweet items. There are all the cakes, scones, jam and cream... tea is normally sweet too. So for me, each dessert needs to be light and not too sweet. I love using fruits, so I always try to incorporate a fruit or fruit flavor into everything I make. Then I just play with the balance of flavors and textures. When eating any of my desserts you will notice something sweet, something salty, a little crunch, a smooth cream, a sharp or acidic gel. It's the balance between them all that makes them unique, as not every bite is the same. There is a depth of flavor hidden in each bit that develops on your palate.

**What are the most popular/trendy flavors in pastry right now?**

I would say chocolate, hazelnut, and caramel are always a winning combination as well as vanilla and raspberry or passion fruit and mango. People enjoy flavors they are familiar with, so I always try to combine them in a traditional way that they can recognize, whilst adding a little Asian twist. For example, miso with chocolate, yuzu with hazelnut, or lychee with raspberry and vanilla.

**What do you think is coming next?**

We can expect anything from Shangri-la The Shard!! Anything could happen and my imagination has no limits, but I will keep working on the flavors of our different pastries and stunning desserts to make ensure guests come back to see what's next.

**What has been your experience as a woman in the pastry kitchens?**

The kitchen environment is always tough, no matter if you are a man or a woman, but there are additional complexities when a woman wants to lead. A majority of the time, you are seen as a weaker member of the team and not so much a leader.

I have dealt with uncomfortable situations in the past but is up to us as women to stand up and set our boundaries and expectations. If there is a lack of respect or your thoughts and feelings are not respected, you need to speak up and be firm with your decisions. We are by no means weaker or less capable in our professional environment and it's important to remember that. We as women have the power and strength to push back and come up stronger having encountered a challenging situation, and that's a beautiful thing.

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**What would you like to see change for women in pastry?**

In general, we need to understand that women can be polite and friendly, and still be respected in a professional setting. I don't think women need to be rude or strong with words to protect themselves. I would love to see more women enter the industry. Our way of leading is more sensitive and I do enjoy working with other women. I would love to see female pastry chefs garnering the same respect and admiration that their male counterparts do.

**Do you ever bake at home?**

I do on occasion, but I try to enjoy my time off doing different activities. Otherwise, my life would completely revolve around cakes all day long... and that would be boring!

**What is your favorite thing to make?**

Anything that involves chocolate!

**What is your favorite thing to eat?**

I appreciate good food. No matter what cuisine, I love eating, it just needs to taste good.

**Do your friends and family always expect you to bring treats?**

Always. But they know me already. They know I do not cook at home and if they want to be spoiled, they need to come to see me at work!

**Tell us about your new book, ESSENZIA...**

I have just written my first book, ESSENZIA, a bilingual pastry cookbook written in English and Spanish, which will be published and available to buy at the end of April.



The Shard is made out of chocolate!

The book talks about the love I have for my profession and the importance of consuming good quality products and desserts. It takes readers through every ingredient, its origins, how to use it, and its function within a recipe. It also discusses all of the chemicals and texturizers we use in professional pastry-making and how to use them depending on the recipes.

It's a very extensive book with over 250 pages of information about pastry techniques. All of the recipes are written in three versions: traditional, gluten-free, and vegan. It's very important to me that people can understand good quality pastry and desserts, no matter what their dietary requirements or preferences. I carefully explain ingredients and how you can substitute animal products with plant-based alternatives. Recipes are easy to follow with visual step-by-step methods and it's suitable for both amateur home bakers and professionals.

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