

Not Your Nine-to-Five

*Don't want to sit in an office all day?
Try your hand at these offbeat jobs instead.*



This sandwich is not going to stand up by itself!

Taking great food photos is about more than just arranging stuff on a table.



Yuli creates and cooks food items to give them a certain look.



The real secret behind this delicious burger? Yuli, the food stylist.

FOOD STYLIST

Love food? Love taking pretty photos of it even more? Unfortunately, it takes more than that to be a real food stylist. Food knowledge plus lots of creativity is extremely important, says Singapore-based professional food stylist Yuli Maria, who attended culinary school.

"It's more than just arranging food and props on the table," she says. For instance, Yuli creates food models to achieve the required look. "I make a lot of food models (both edible and inedible) for the sake of effectiveness and the aesthetics. Certain foods, such as ice cream, don't last long under harsh photography lighting," says Yuli.

You also have to be well-organised, as shoots require immense preparation, and a good problem solver, as the food may not come across the way you'd like, and clients may change the brief at the last minute.

How much does a food stylist earn? Yuli, who has styled for famous brands such as Burger King, McDonald's, Pizza Hut and Din Tai Fung, says it depends on the requirements of the project and the stylist's experience. She adds that, in general, snagging two big projects a month "is more than enough to pay the bills".

If you want to learn the ropes, Yuli is launching a basic food styling class, and you can find out more on her Instagram (@yulimaria).



PET-SITTER

If you're an animal lover, what better way to spend your day than hanging out with adorable pooches and felines? Siang Li Ting, who owns Comforts From Home, became a full-time pet-sitter four years ago after she realised there was a demand for quality pet carers when owners travel.

To be a pet-sitter, you should preferably have experience with all kinds of animals and different breeds, says the 26-year-old, who was previously a veterinary assistant. Having medical knowledge and being able to work and react quickly under stress is also paramount.

But it's not all cuddles and games. Workdays typically span 12 to 14 hours, there are hardly any off days. She earns an average of \$3,000 to \$4,000 a month.

"If you're thinking of being a professional pet-sitter, you must be prepared to work really hard, pull in long hours, and burn weekends and public holidays."

But Li Ting won't have it any other way. Becoming a huge part of her clients' lives and seeing pets warm up to her is something that gives her great satisfaction. "Caring for animals is in my blood. Even when it gets really hard and tiring, I would choose to do it all over again!"

The perks of this job are furry and lovable, but it can still be hard work!



HAND OR FEET MODEL

You don't need a flawless face to be a model. According to Bonita Ma, head booker of Basic Models Management, anyone who has pretty hands or feet can apply.

Don't for a second think this is an easy job. "Some models don't know how to position their hands daintily, or how to hold a product so their hands still look good. This takes a lot of practice," adds Bonita.

Plus, "You'll need to take good care of your hands or feet, and there should be no scars. Nails should be neatly filed before casting, and tiny hairs have to be removed or waxed," she says.

To get yourself a gig, you apply to a talent or model agency and are generally paid \$300 to \$600 for a half-day shoot.



Being a hand model requires you to look after your body (or at least parts of it) well.





Shots like this take a lot of work, even though it looks so calm.

MERMAID

Who hasn't fantasised about being just like Disney's Ariel?

But in case you think being a professional mermaid is all glitz and glamour, Cara Nicole Neo, Singapore's first professional mermaid and founder of the Singapore Mermaid School, begs to differ.

"You're often working long hours in the sun, while keeping your energy levels up so you can transfer that enthusiasm to your clients or students. You're wriggling into a 15kg mermaid tail in the hot, humid weather – and then you still have to look sparkly and magical when you make your entrance!"

It's love for the craft that keeps these mermaids going. Cash flow is unpredictable, and the equipment and accessories required are not cheap. "For a job so steeped in fantasy, there are a lot of reality checks!" says Cara.

But it's all worthwhile. "Even at my most tired, I'll get into the pool to conduct a class and climb out feeling happy and fulfilled. The people, life lessons, mythology, and core values I get to impart make it all worthwhile."

Cara's school will teach you the necessary skills to becoming a mermaid. She's always keeping an eye out for potential mermaids to perform with her at events, so who knows, that could be your next big break.



SOUND HEALER

Sound healing is an ancient practice that has recently garnered lots of buzz. It's said to heal people physically, mentally and spiritually through voice, Tibetan bowls, tuning forks and musical instruments. "[These tools help to] induce relaxation, stress relief, sleep, accelerated learning and pain control," explains Kathy Gabriel, a yoga teacher and sound healer, who has been practicing this healing technique for the last two years. The 25-year-old earns about \$80 to \$150 per session.

To be a sound healer, you must first get yourself certified at one of the training institutes, such as Tama Do, The Academy of Sound Healing, Color Therapy and Movement. While it's not particularly well-paying, "It's fulfilling as you work with clients to help them discover or work through certain issues," says Kathy. 

