Across Tables and Cultures

Student Profile

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—Jessica Trinh BR ’20

Jessica Trinh BR ’20 knows that the heart of a culture is often found in its food. “My parents came to America from Vietnam,” she said. “Cooking and baking were two of the main ways they taught me about our history.” This insight served her well during a recent summer abroad as part of Yale Summer Session in Spain.

“This was my first visit to Europe,” Jessica explained. “I stayed in Bilbao for four weeks, attending classes, traveling throughout the country, and practicing the language. The most precious moments, however, were the ones spent at the dinner table with my host mother and her children, hearing their stories and sharing my own.”

A neuroscience major, Jessica is among the first in her family to attend college. Her trip was funded by Yale’s International Summer Award (ISA) program, which enables students on financial aid to have an international experience.

“We stood before Picasso’s Guernica in Madrid, visited the beautiful coastline of San Sebastian, and participated in the historic Festival of San Fermin in Pamplona. Our excursions brought to life the tensions among different autonomous communities and the unique culture that emerged from Spain’s intricate history.”

Jessica also used the opportunity to share her own culture. “I feel blessed to have been able to cook Vietnamese food for my Spanish host family,” she said. “One night I made Vietnamese spring rolls, and they were a huge hit! My host family shared their own personal recipes with me. Combined with everything we learned in class and our cultural experiences, I learned so much more than I thought possible.”

A robust financial aid program brings exceptional students like Jessica to Yale, regardless of their financial circumstances. To learn more about ways to support these students, please visit giving.yale.edu or call 800.395.7646.