

THE PRESERVES PIONEER

“I told Granny I’d turn her into a business... now we’re transforming what Britain puts on its toast”

Nikki Frith, 37, lives with husband, James, and children Jemima, seven, Henry, five, and Lizzie, one, in Ramsbottom, Lancashire. She set up Granny Cool, a range of homemade preserves.

Six months in, I got a business partner, Lindsey Oldroyd. We complement each other well and we share the workload.

➤ BREAKTHROUGH MOMENT Shortly after teaming up with Lindsey we

➤ THE IDEA For years I’d joked to my husband’s grandmother, Marjorie, 90, that I was going to turn her amazing homemade marmalade into a business. She was always chopping up citrus fruit and bubbling it away in a pan, to create delicious marmalade, completely different to any

shop-bought recipe. We called her “Granny Marmalade”, which suddenly seemed the perfect name for a business. Around this time I was reassessing my life, prompted partly by the sad death of my mother from cancer. I had worked as an actress but since children arrived I’d been temping and didn’t want to do that long-term. I asked Marjorie to teach me how to make the recipes, and she loved the idea that she might be the inspiration for a business. In September 2012, I bought a jam pan and she gave me my first lesson.

- INITIAL COSTS**
- Jam pans: £60
 - Jars: £300
 - Labels: £500
 - Fruit and sugar: £250
 - Design and logo: £500
 - Trade mark cost and legal fees: £4,000
 - Stock: £3,000

approached Oswaldtwistle Mills, a shopping village in Lancashire. They took the marmalade straightaway and it felt like everything was coming together. We weren’t taking a salary, but we were covering our costs. By June 2013, we’d gone from three stockists to 25.

➤ WHERE I AM NOW In June, we launched our Three Fruit Marmalade and Ginger Marmalade in Sainsbury’s, a huge step. We approached them and they loved the concept, getting back to us just a week later. We stayed with the same company to handmade our range, and now we have four marmalades and four curds. We’re certified kosher, halal, vegetarian and vegan so that we can go into any market around the world. Granny Marjorie herself

➤ WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? Using money I’d inherited from Mum and with support from my husband, who has his own career guidance business, I bought ingredients, pans and jars, and got some bright, contemporary labels designed and printed. Armed with a food hygiene certificate, I’d cook when the children went to sleep. To start with I sold at farmers’ markets and customers gave me feedback to fine-tune the recipe. By January 2013, I had two stockists –

a local butcher’s and a deli. Three months later, I found a small company who would hand-cut the fruit and make the marmalade just as Granny would herself.

- BUSINESS IN FIGURES**
- Launched: September 2012
 - Start-up costs: £8,610
 - Turnover: £320,000
 - Website: grannycool.com



Their yummy Three Fruit Marmalade

has never asked for anything from the business, but we hope we’ll soon be able to give some of our profits to a charity she chooses. We still plough all profits back into the business, only taking £200 a month salary each. We hope to increase this, but growing the business comes first!

➤ GLITCHES In 2014 we were contacted by BBC’s *Dragons’ Den* and decided to go for it. But they didn’t get the name, Granny Marmalade, or the brand, telling us we would “only ever be regional”. Afterwards I thought, *Have I just ruined the business?* But, we took their thoughts on board and rebranded, changing the name to Granny Cool so that we could expand beyond preserves in the future.

➤ TIP Stockists like the fact they are talking to us, not sales people. >>



Business partners Nikki, left, and Lindsey, right



w&h NEW DIRECTIONS

We cooked up biz from a
FAMILY RECIPE!

Turning their favourite family recipes into brilliant new businesses proved to be a delicious idea for these three women

THE CURRY CONNOISSEUR

“My mother’s cooking held the secret to my curry business”

Sameena Thompson, 54, is married to Julian. She has one daughter, Zahra, aged 16, and they live in Godalming, Surrey. In December 2014, Sameena set up her curry sauce range, The Art of Curry.

► **THE IDEA** Growing up, our house was full of the smells of creamy curries and fragrant herbs and spices. My mum Seema was brought up in India, where her mother taught her how to cook. She came to England with my father from Pakistan and settled in Yorkshire, then moved to London. She used to hold dinner parties for the neighbours, and 20 people piled in for a beautiful spread. I was always by mum’s side, eager to learn how to work magic in the kitchen. After leaving home at 24, I pursued a career in journalism and communications, working at Sky News then in government as a press secretary. I valued my work, but approaching my fifties, I felt a growing sense of dissatisfaction. The turning point was August 2014 when I was made redundant. After initially panicking, I realised I could finally pursue my love of food. I began brainstorming a business based around my mother’s cooking.

INITIAL COSTS

Brand design and packaging: £10,000
Website: £2,000
Trademarks and insurance: £700
Lab testing of food: £2,000
Equipment: £1,000
Marketing/trade shows: £9,500

► **WHAT HAPPENED NEXT** In December 2014, I started developing six curry sauces based on my mother’s recipes. I started off in my kitchen at home, sourcing ingredients from local shops. I wanted to put the sauces into chilled pouches, so, using my redundancy pay-out, I went to a local brand design company to get the sleeves made. I also hired a web designer and joined the Surrey Farmer’s Market Co-Operative, an organisation for local food suppliers. I went to my first event in March 2015 and luckily, people loved the sauces. I later employed a local PR company, who were brilliant.

► BREAKTHROUGH MOMENT

Showcasing the business at the annual Farm Shop & Deli Show in Birmingham in April 2016 was a real turning point. Representatives from a big supermarket, a bakery chain, and a pub chain all said that they wanted to talk about supplying my sauces in their stores. We’re still in talks but it has been a huge confidence boost.

BUSINESS IN FIGURES

Launched: December 2014
Start-up costs: £25,200
Turnover: £7,000
Website: theartofcurry.co.uk



► **WHERE I AM NOW** We made a deal with a mail-order company so that we could deliver the sauces nationally and internationally, and we’re now stocked in farm shops and delis around the UK. Two months ago I acquired a premises, an old restaurant on Godalming High Street with a huge kitchen. I also use it to hold a dining club, where I cook dinner for around 30 people for £40 each. I have an assistant working with me three days a week – it’s a huge help as I still run the business alone. I only take a tiny salary, something I’m hoping to work on! Luckily my husband is prepared to pick up our household bills.

► **GLITCHES** On one manic day when I still worked in my kitchen, I had two sauces on the go – each providing around 30 packs. Misjudging which sauce contained which ingredients, I mistakenly put 15 cans of tomatoes into the korma, which already had tomatoes. I managed to save it by adding more spices, but it could have meant a real loss of trust from my stockists – so it taught me to be more careful.

► **TIP** Be prepared to pay for quality services in the beginning.



Sameena with her mum Seema

new directions

were. I started getting stocked in shops, restaurants, and hotels around London. By 2007 I had enough business to rent an office in London.

► **BREAKTHROUGH MOMENT** Getting the Rare Tea Company into Waitrose in 2009 was huge. I’d approached them in 2007 but it took years of perseverance.

INITIAL COSTS

Website: £10,000
Brand design: £10,000
Initial stock: £10,000
Flights: £1,000

We started with four teas in 22 stores, but now have a full range of nine available nationwide.

► WHERE I AM NOW

I employ ten members of staff in the office. My main job is sourcing the tea and nurturing relationships with the farmers. We’ve secured contracts with Claridge’s, Royal Ascot, and the famous Chateau Marmont hotel in LA, and are now exporting to supply a global market.

► **GLITCHES** In 2009 I got a contract to create a blend for the Royal Air Force charity but I needed to borrow to buy stock. Unfortunately the bank turned me down as it was the height of the recession. I panicked, but decided to turn to my loyal customers. Amazingly, I started receiving small loans of around £500, which I was able to pay back shortly after.

► **TIP** Have a financial plan for the first three years. **w&h**

BUSINESS IN FIGURES

Launched: June 2004
Start-up costs: £31,000
Turnover: £2,000,000 projected 2017
Website: rareteacompany.com



THE TEA LADY

“I was inspired by my tea ancestry – and now I import rare tea to supply top hotels like Claridge’s”

Henrietta Lovell, 45, lives in Camden, London. In 2004, she set up the Rare Tea Company, importing and exporting specialist teas.

► **THE IDEA** Tea was in my blood long before I was born. My great, great, grandfather founded a provision merchants, Lovell & Christmas, one of the main suppliers in 19th century London. I was inspired by my great-aunt too, also a tea enthusiast. As a child I watched as she served loose leaf tea from a bone china tea set – it felt elegant and exciting. In 2000, I was working as a project manager for a print company and, on a business trip to China, I saw a colleague order a £50 pot of oolong tea. Who would pay that much for tea I wondered? After that visit to China, I researched teas and whenever my business trips took me to tea-producing countries I visited tea farms when I got the chance. There wasn’t a market for loose leaf teas in the UK, so I thought there was great potential and resolved to start my own import business.

► **WHAT HAPPENED NEXT** After quitting my job in 2004 and having just secured my first contract with a tea farm, I had a serious setback when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was a tough time but I scaled down my plans rather than give up. It gave me a focus. I set up a website and word of mouth spread. I travelled to Nepal and Malawi to taste and source the tea when I recovered. I found a way to get the tea packaged fresh near each farm, then delivered to my flat. We later outsourced warehousing. I also worked with a designer to create the brand logo and labels. I covered my overheads for the first two years until I could start drawing a salary and took on my first member of staff. We started charging £4 per pouch, marketing the tea as an affordable luxury. I approached chefs and sommeliers and they loved how different the blends



Henrietta sourcing tea in Nepal

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