



HOW THEY DID IT

WORKING A TREAT

Kate Schrire and Marianne Visser give you the scoop on how they've grown their successful ice-cream business, The Creamery. **By Leah van Deventer**

Seven years ago, Kate Schrire, a chef and food activist, started making ice cream at home. 'I was never really a big ice-cream eater,' she says, 'but I got this little ice-cream churn – I can't even remember how – and I started playing around with it ... seeing what happened if you added less sugar, more fruit and so on. The stuff coming out of there was a sea change – it was so different from everything I thought ice cream was.'

TEAMING UP

Kate soon realised there was a gap in the market for really great handmade ice cream in Cape Town. 'It took me about two years to commit to the idea, but at the beginning of 2011 I quit my job and threw myself into it.' She knew she couldn't

do it alone, though, so she posted an advert on Facebook looking for someone to run the business with her. Marianne Visser, a friend of Kate's husband, asked if she could apply. 'I was working in the film industry, but everything I was doing outside of work was food-oriented,' Marianne explains, 'and I wanted to make a career shift.'

GOOD PROBLEMS

For two years Kate and Marianne sold their ice cream at markets, festivals and private events before opening their first shop in Newlands. It was an instant hit, but that brought its own difficulties. As ice cream is an afternoon product, they also tried to offer breakfast. 'It didn't last very long,' laughs Marianne.

'There was already enough new stuff to figure out about our core product without trying to make soft-boiled eggs!' Four years on, their biggest challenge is growing with their business. 'It's too complicated now for us to do the books ourselves or supervise in the kitchen. Recognising our own talents and bringing others on board who have the skills we don't – such as food technologists or book-keepers – is essential,' Kate says.

PROOF OF THE PUDDING

Apart from being able to refinance when necessary, and always believing they can do better, they attribute their success largely to the quality – and uniqueness – of their



KATE SCHRIRE & MARIANNE VISSER

Ages: 32 and 30

Current homes: Cape Town

What they love about their business: Working with a product that brings so much joy!

Website: thecreamery.co.za

product. 'Ice cream should taste primarily of its key ingredient. Strawberry ice cream should have that amazing flavour of strawberries. It shouldn't be sweet, a bit fruity, and then, "Oh it's pink, so I guess it must be strawberry.'

You should be able to tell the flavour with your eyes shut,' says Kate. 'And it's not as cheap as an ice lolly, but it's an affordable treat,' continues Marianne.

GETTING GUIDANCE

'What's been really valuable to us has been having a network of other small-business owners. They're not necessarily in the same field, but you can run staffing questions by them, or ask about suppliers and so on,' says Marianne. 'It's also nice knowing you're not alone when stuff doesn't go your way,' adds Kate. 'Also, do a lot of research, and get good financial, administrative and HR systems in place from the beginning, even if that means paying consultants to show you how.' GH

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