

BY JUST EAT FOR BUSINESS



**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

# Foreword

**By Lucy Cantan, Sales and Partnerships Director  
at Just Eat for Business**

Each year for International Women's Day, the world unites to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women across the globe. This year's theme #BreakTheBias, aims to break down the barriers to women's success and encourages people to take action to achieve gender parity.

At Just Eat for Business, we work with a wide range of incredible female-owned businesses that provide exceptional meals, treats and experiences to businesses across the nation. From a leading London Chocolatier to viral meringue makers, the variety and quality of the food they provide is unparalleled.

That's why this International Women's Day, we want to champion women in our industry, by shining a light on their journeys and hopefully inspiring a new generation of female business leaders.

Hope you enjoy it.

To celebrate International Women's Day (Tuesday 8th March 2022) we wanted to champion some of the female vendors that sell their products through Just Eat for Business. IWD gives organisations a welcome opportunity to highlight those still-essential conversations surrounding equality, diversity and amplifying women's voices. First celebrated in the early 1900s, International Women's Day is a global day honouring the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality.



# EK BAKERY

## What barriers have you faced in your career and how did you overcome them?

I thought a lot about this question. When I think about barriers, I don't feel I can speak of any. I feel incredibly lucky and have a lot of privileges. Through books, podcasts and other resources, I am aware of issues within the industry; hospitality and investment in particular can be notoriously difficult to navigate, especially for women.

A difficult experience that springs to mind is that a few years ago I was supplying brownies wholesale and ended up being owed over £10,000 from a retailer. I was working really long days, not sleeping enough and not exercising or nourishing myself adequately. My dad died during this time which immediately gave me a greater sense of perspective on everything. I asked myself, 'what was the long term value in working like this?' There was none. I ended the partnership, I did get paid eventually but it was not worth the work.

## What are you most proud of in your career?

Sustaining self employment for over 7 years! I had no idea that you could start a business or work for yourself full time. Throughout school I had thought the only way of working was getting into a "proper career" and for years I racked my brains over what role I could take on. I enjoyed baking from an early age but at no stage had I thought it was a viable working option.



**What's the one piece of advice you'd give to other female entrepreneurs who are just starting out?**

Speak to others, arrange meet ups, go to events - people are much friendlier than you think! One tip on reaching out to people: make questions fair and appropriate. You might not receive much information if you DM someone out of the blue. Be specific and don't ask too much of one person, and be prepared for a non-reply.

Secondly, don't quit your day job! Starting a business whilst you are working gives you room to make errors and space to change if something isn't working out. If it's something you are truly passionate about you will create time for your project and it will grow.

**What does the 2022 International Women's Day slogan, #BreakTheBias, mean for you in your career?**

As I mentioned above, I have a great number of privileges. I think it's down to everyone to lead by example, work fairly and look at ways of lifting others up. For International Women's Day we donate a portion of every sale to Smart Works - a charity empowering women to get into or return to work.







### **Can you tell us about a role model who has inspired you throughout your career?**

So many! Food-wise, I adore Anna Jones, Yotam Ottolenghi and Green Kitchen Stories - I want to eat everything they make/write about. When it comes to entrepreneurs, Ravneet Gill (Pastry Chef), Alex Head (Founder of Social Pantry) and Ella Mills (Deliciously Ella). I listen to a lot of podcasts and find a lot of value in hearing stories from business owners in other fields. 'How I Built This' and 'Diary of a CEO' are great ones!

### **What do you want to achieve next?**

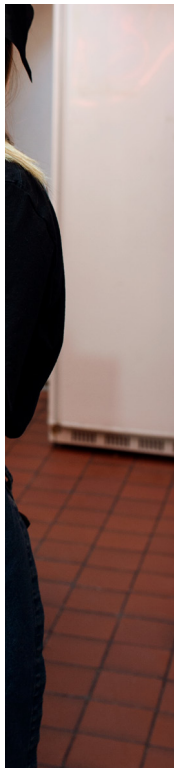
Eventually we would like our own space. We currently share a fantastic kitchen in Clerkenwell - it's been brilliant and fundamental for progressing the business. In the future it would be incredible to have a small retail outlet. I love the set up that Le Choux, Lily Vanilli and Meringue Girls have. The long term aim is to maintain integrity - we want to be known for high quality products and excellent customer service.

### **Anything else you'd like to add?**

Thank you to everyone for supporting EKB so far. It's total magic that we are able to do this for a job. We are always grateful and hope we can help spread a little joy in your days.



# MERINGUE GIRLS



## What are you most proud of in your career?

I'm most proud of creating a business that has stood the test of time, and working with a fabulous team of strong women. We've developed a great brand name, we've got amazing repeat clients, and we are making it work with our lives & families!

Meringue Girls is a girl-power baking brand. Before it all started in 2012, I did so many different things - from a runner on Big Brother, to marketing for Nintendo to being a food stylist!

Meringue Girls kind of happened by chance - I went travelling after a relationship breakup and realised I wanted to retrain as a chef.

After my training, I got a job in a very male-dominated kitchen. I met Stacey (the original co-founder) and we bonded; thinking of ways of starting up our own thing. We saw a gap in the market for a cool new baking brand. 10 years on, (OMG!) highlights include publishing two cookbooks, having two kids, and having our own bakery space off Broadway Market.

What barriers have you faced in your career and how did you overcome them?



During the pandemic, we had to really think out of the box to pivot what we were offering. We mainly focused on postal gifts and baking kits, and opened the bakery as a shop front.

What does the 2022 International Women's Day slogan, #BreakTheBias, mean for you in your career?

**For us, #BreakTheBias is all about creating an inclusive work environment. Before Meringue Girls, I was originally working as a chef in a male-dominated kitchen. Everyone was super supportive but hospitality is a tricky place for people who want to start families. Sometimes the hours are long and unsociable, the pay is low and the working conditions aren't great. This doesn't always work for people who are trying to be parents - we aim to create an environment which supports & empowers all people.**





### **What's the one piece of advice you'd give to other female entrepreneurs in food who are just starting out?**

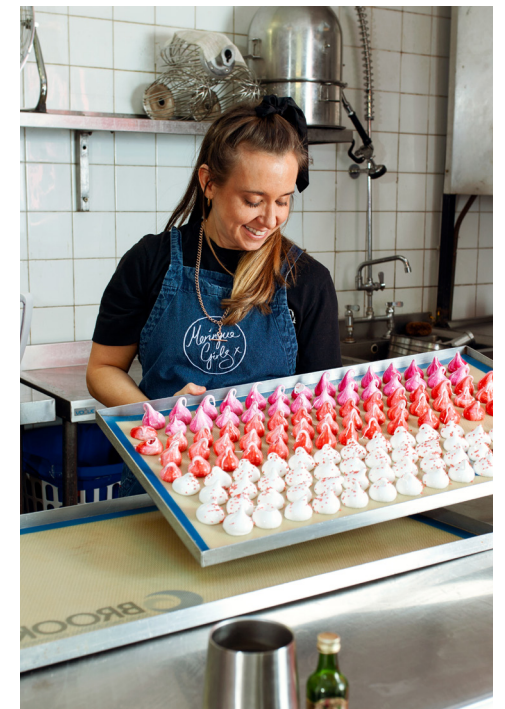
Our experience is finding a niche and being the best in the field at it - it's the best way to attract instant PR, and to help people "get it". We would also recommend starting with a business partner, if you can. Bouncing ideas off each other and keeping each other motivated is invaluable during the early days! Gain all the knowledge you can - reach out to businesses who inspire you - ask to grab a coffee, share ideas and learn from the experiences of those you admire, and be prepared to do the same in return. Pay it forward, as it were! Our mottos have always been to 'fake it until you make it', and 'if you don't ask, you don't get'.

### **Can you tell us about a role model who has inspired you throughout your career?**

My mum, as she oozes entrepreneurial spirit - and was a complete 80's shoulder pad powerhouse when I was growing up!

### **What do you want to achieve next?**

Over the years we've looked into several opportunities - from having our own bricks-and-mortar shops, to franchising in the Middle East, to stocking in UK supermarkets. The pandemic has scuppered many plans, but I would love to look again at expanding Meringue Girls in some way!





# OH MY DAAL



**What are you most proud of in your career?**

I'm proud of the fact that we've been able to share Indian food in a way that felt authentic with so many people. Initially, I wasn't sure what the reaction would be to the sort of Indian food that Oh My Daal makes, so to hear all of the great feedback and see so many of our customers come back time and time again has been pretty amazing! I'm also really proud of the fact that we have so many women in our team. When I started Oh My Daal, I didn't realise how rare it is to find women in restaurant kitchens, so it feels good to know that at Oh My Daal we're showing just how brilliantly women can handle a professional kitchen environment.



**What barriers have you faced in your career and how did you overcome them?**

On reflection, I think one of the biggest barriers is having moments of self-doubt that hold you back. Personally, overcoming it has meant being aware of it and reminding myself of past situations where I've doubted myself but ultimately managed to progress ahead. It's something I'm still working on but thinking about it in this way definitely helps me to feel more confident about making new decisions.

Not having any prior experience in the food or restaurant industry has also been a barrier in some ways. However, I've also come to realise that being able to approach a food business (or any business!) as an 'outsider' has its advantages, as you look at situations and problems in a fresh way.



**What's the one piece of advice you'd give to other female entrepreneurs who are just starting out?**

Just make a start, however small. For me this was the part that took the longest. I found it really useful to break down what seemed like this huge thing into much smaller steps, which were much more do-able and way less daunting. Once you start ticking off some of these smaller steps, you realise you've actually taken a pretty big step forward!



**What does the 2022 International Women's Day slogan, #BreakTheBias, mean for you in your career?**

As I wasn't part of the food industry prior to Oh My Daal, I didn't realise just how male dominated it is. It's really great to know that in our own small way, we've absolutely broken this bias at Oh My Daal by having such a female-heavy team, and proving that when you break these kinds of biases, the results are fantastic! For me, breaking biases goes beyond just gender though. It also extends to things such as age and background - at OMD, our team spans different generations and each person comes from a different culture and part of the world. It has really helped us to learn and grow as a team, because everyone comes with their own unique perspective on things.



**Can you tell us about a role model who has inspired you throughout your career?**

Oh My Daal wouldn't really exist without my Mum - she has been the biggest inspiration behind all the food we make. I don't think I'm someone who has had that one person who has been a role model throughout, but I'm constantly inspired by others who have created businesses around things that they truly care about, and their effort to share their own unique perspective.

**What do you want to achieve next?**

Growing Oh My Daal is our main focus right now. This is our second year in operation so I'd love to be able to share our food with more of London and beyond. We currently operate as a kitchen so it would be great to get in front of our customers too. I've always got a ton of ideas in my head about how we can build on what Oh My Daal offers, so I'm excited to see where our journey takes us!

Photographer: Emily Almodovar



*#BreakTheBias*

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IWD 

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