

Case Study on:



Ruban D'Honneur Recipient

European Business Awards 2011

The Chairman's Selection

*Katerina Home Made Sweets Ltd
Katerina Christoforou*



Katerina Christoforou

The Sweet Taste of Success

Words from the Judges

“Looking back can be a successful way of moving forward.”



Katerina Christoforou has built up a successful family-owned and operated business specialising in the making of traditional Cypriot ‘spoon sweets’. Her drive, determination and ambition make her a well-deserved recipient of the Ruban D’Honneur for The Chairman’s Selection at the European Business Awards 2011.

Having emigrated to Australia after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, Katerina and her family were desperate to keep some of their Cypriot traditions alive. Making spoon sweets, a Cypriot delicacy of fruits and vegetables preserved in syrup, was one of these time-honoured traditions.

When Katerina returned to Cyprus in the mid-’80s, she left her family behind in Australia. Alone in her homeland, Katerina began to make spoon sweets to beat homesickness. Her spoon sweets started to gather notoriety and she soon realised that her hobby had the potential to become a successful business.

“I started out making spoon sweets as small gifts for people, but word spread and soon strangers began asking if they could buy them. I had no solid business plan but one jar led to another and soon people were buying a whole boxful!”

Having decided to set up a business, Katerina converted her basement into a larger kitchen and Katerina Home Made Sweets was born. She began selling to local grocers but demand quickly grew and soon large supermarkets across the island were stocking her products.

Given the traditional nature of the product, the media in Cyprus took Katerina into their hearts and she began to build up a profile as the “spoon sweets expert”.

“Because my spoon sweets are homemade, I wanted to personalise my business by giving it a face... my face. Spoon sweets are more than just products; they are reminders of mothers, grandmothers and families. People needed to know me in order to trust that I was going to make sweets just as they remembered them and not to tarnish their memories.”

Ruban D’Honneur Recipient



Being a woman has been both positive and negative for Katerina. As a woman, customers believed wholeheartedly in her ability to create wonderful homemade products; however, she often faced obstacles in the male-dominated business world. In the beginning with no contacts, very little capital and limited business or marketing skills, she struggled to be taken seriously, but her resolve was unwavering and eventually her confidence in her product won through and she got her business off the ground.

“Back in the late-’80s and early-’90s, spoon sweets were considered old-fashioned by modern Cypriots. Luckily, tastes have now changed and people are celebrating tradition as well as looking for healthier foods. I am proud to have taken a traditional product and made it relevant for today’s modern world.”

Innovation is central to the success of Katerina Home Made Sweets and the company is constantly researching new trends. As tastes become more sophisticated and people become more adventurous, Katerina has responded by introducing ingredients such as prickly pear, pine nuts, taro root, mushrooms and even onions and garlic to her range of spoon sweets. Katerina has also introduced low calorie sweets which are ideal for diabetics.

“I have great respect for the traditional recipes that were passed on to me by my ancestors but I am also aware that in order to succeed, I need to be constantly reinventing my product lines. It is a delight to see a customer trying one of my new recipes for the first time.”

Tourism is very important to Katerina Home Made Sweets and its new traditionally-styled factory has become a must-see tourist-attraction for visitors of all nationalities. Katerina Home Made Sweets also provides spoon sweets to luxury hotels and traditional Cypriot restaurants.

“Katerina Christoforou was born and grew up in Cyprus, and spent hours of her childhood watching her grandmother make spoon sweets. Following her family migration to, and education in, Australia she returned to set up a successful business using her grandmother’s recipes to produce the traditional style sweets for the modern market.”

Phil Forrest, Chairman of Judges, European Business Awards 2011



Looking to the Future...

This year, Katerina Home Made Sweets has over 20 products in its range and is always expanding this to tap into different tastes and markets.

In recent years, the company has been successfully producing wedding and christening favours and is hoping to develop this further. Served in small, decorative jars, the spoon sweets can be decorated for any number of celebrations.

“Cypriot weddings are often very large events with thousands of guests. After we have supplied favours for a wedding, the phone starts to ring off the hook with other brides-to-be wanting favours for their weddings. This word of mouth advertising is proving very effective as more and more couples choose to celebrate our traditional culture.”

Katerina Home Made Sweets is constantly considering ways to increase its export

activity. The company is most prevalent in those countries with a large Greek Cypriot expat community such as the United States, Australia, Dubai and France. It also stocks specialist Greek delicatessens in the UK and other European countries. The sweets have become a favourite with Japanese people and Katerina exports Rose Petal Sweets and Olive Sweets to a chain of gourmet delicatessens in Japan.

Although looking to expand further afield, Katerina Home Made Sweets is, and always will be, a Cypriot company at heart.

Katerina explains; **“The prime purpose of my company is to preserve the age-old tradition of Cypriot spoon sweet making and to create a successful, modern product without losing any of its homemade charm or identity. As we continue to grow, we need to be mindful of this and never lose sight of our foundations.”**





"This recognition of both my successes and sacrifices makes me feel very proud, not just for me and my business but also for my family and for Cyprus as a country. The European Business Awards offer an opportunity for people overseas to hear about the culture and traditional tastes of Cyprus and this gives me a great sense of achievement."



Katerina Christoforou,
Katerina Home Made Sweets

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About Katerina Home Made Sweets

As a child, Katerina Christoforou used spent hours watching her grandmother make spoon sweets; mixing up pots of steaming delights that were carefully poured into jars and stored away to be used for desserts or as gifts for friends and family. It was these memories that formed the basis for Katerina's business, Katerina Home Made Sweets, which was set up in the early 1990s upon her return to Cyprus following her family's move to Australia.

The business continued to grow and by 1997, the name Katerina was synonymous with spoon sweets and she was well known across the island as the 'spoon sweet expert' thanks to her many television and other media appearances.

In 2003, Katerina Home Made Sweets built a traditional-styled factory with modern capabilities which met strict European standards including HACCP and ISO 22000. The factory enabled Katerina Home Made Sweets to expand production and quickly became a tourist attraction in itself. The company received an award for its progressiveness and its efforts to use surplus agricultural products. This 'A' prize was awarded by the 'Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment'. In 2010, the company won the TimeOut Eating Awards, Best Cypriot Product.

Today Katerina makes more than 20 different types of spoon sweets, jams and other traditional foods. Without using any colours or preservatives, her sweets are made in the old fashioned way for a modern, discerning consumer.



About the European Business Awards

Since 2007, the European Business Awards programme has been shining a light on the most pioneering businesses on the continent by promoting excellence, best practice and innovation in the European business community. The awards programme recognises excellence in all disciplines of business including individual business functions. Last year entrants ranged from fish farming organisations to renewable energy firms. Together they had a combined turnover greater than €766 billion Euros (6% of EU GDP) and employed over three and a half million people between them.

Businesses from each of the 28 European territories are invited to enter the Awards. The competition for finalist places is fierce with many of the Europe's most established brands being represented.

The judging panel is comprised of experts in their fields who each bring experience, business acumen and understanding to the board. The overall winners in each of the categories will be announced at the Awards ceremony in Barcelona on 22nd November 2011.

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