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Optimism in a Tin

Mya Jacobson saw her fortune not on Wall Street but in cookies.

By: [Janet Holloway](#) | 12/8/2008

Mya Jacobson saw her fortune not on Wall Street but in cookies.

After seven years standing on a box and yelling out orders at the American Stock Exchange, Jacobson had become disillusioned. She liked the job well enough and had even taken time to get a law degree in the evenings, but she was restless and realized that her life was not her own.

"This was not whom I was meant to be," says Jacobson, 34. "It had been a good run, but it was time for a change, and I wanted to do something more creative. I loved words and food and working with charities that helped people, so when the financial company closed, cookies became the conduit to doing what I wanted."

In 2004 Jacobson started baking cookies in her Jersey City, N.J., apartment, developing her business by selling cookies and gift items via the internet. At first she responded to online orders from friends and colleagues who wanted cookies and gift baskets around the holidays. Inside each gift package, she includes a quote from someone inspirational--Eleanor Roosevelt, Gandhi or a poet.

"Cookies are a timeless product that always make people feel good," Jacobson says. "I want to feed body *and* soul." By donating a portion of every sale to a charity of the consumer's choice, she's serving others as well.

Jacobson didn't think of what she was doing as a business. It was a way to stay in touch with people, keep busy and follow her passion--and there was little risk involved.

"Everyone helped with the baking--my family, my friends; they loved it. My brother came over and bagged cookies every day. Soon enough, however, we realized we were baking 24 hours a day."

Jacobson knew she couldn't keep up that pace in her apartment, so she began writing a business plan for a business she called [Feed Your Soul](#). She took the plan to the New Jersey Small Business Development Center, where a consultant explained the SBA's low-interest loan process and helped her focus the plan and the financials.

By November 2005, Feed Your Soul's doors were open, and Jacobson was on her way to becoming a



Mya Jacobson

leading purveyor of gourmet cookies. Having the space allowed her to do direct and online sales as well as wholesale, she says.

"We can buy larger quantities and control costs. It's also allowed us to expand our line of gift items and customize our products."

The company offers cookie products that are packaged and presented as employee incentives; business gifts with the company logo on the ribbon, tins and cards; student care packages; and even a cookie-of-the-month club. Gross sales last year were about \$300,000, and Feed Your Soul is on track to double that this year, projecting more than \$800,000 in sales.

Seeing so many individuals and small companies cutting out luxury or indulgent purchases during this economic downturn, Jacobson is redirecting her sales to the wholesale market.

"I've partnered with a co-packer, which allows us to create a larger volume and more economical pricing. And by contracting with an outside distributor, I have more time to pay attention to the business and the brand," she says.

She recently signed cookie contracts with Kings Super Markets, Saks, and Dean & DeLuca gourmet food stores, and she's talking with airline companies and hotels about carrying specially created "turn-down" gifts for guests.

Her biggest challenge has been growing the business.

"It's easy when you're small; you can be the best baker, the best merchandiser [and] make sure your gifts arrive on time. As you grow, you have to rely on others to share your passion, your mission and do the excellent job you expect. You have to be willing to train and delegate and develop contracts with outside vendors," she says. Jacobson has five full-time employees and hires others as needed.

She has successfully combined her love of words and food to feed her soul. "Everything to sweeten your day," she says. "It's optimism in a tin."

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