



# RISING POPULARITY FOR THE ORANGE BAKERY

There's no age barrier to starting a business and no right or wrong reason either. Kitty Tait and her dad Alex would not have believed it if they'd been told a year ago they would be running a bakery. And at 15, Kitty was, by some distance, the youngest person to seek help from OxLEP Business and the Elevate programme.

The Orange Bakery in Watlington has a high street shop where people queue along the street to buy their bread at opening time. Unsurprisingly, they sell out every day.

"I needed something else to occupy me besides school work" Kitty told me. "I'm home schooled after an illness and I hated things like homecraft and gardening. But then my Dad, shared his love of baking and that was it. I just love it. Now my Dad is my business partner too."

"All I want to do is bake and bake. I do feel a sense of responsibility doing this. We use live yeast and make sourdough bread, so the dough really needs me and I have to look after it properly."

In a heady 6 months, Kitty began baking at home with a few neighbours and friends as customers, quickly expanding to subscribers who collected their bread from a cupboard at her front door. After several successful pop-up shops, it was clear there was demand for a full-time presence on the town. With crowd funding, the shop soon followed. Other bakers were generous too, donating bits of kit and sharing tips and techniques.

## **Ideas, support and funding**

To get up to speed on useful skills Alex Tait contacted OxLEP Business and had some support sessions with a Network Navigator who was able to suggest ways of getting help for gaps in their knowledge or experience. "It opened our eyes

to the possibilities” said Alex. “It was excellent to have that helping hand. Our first commercial oven was even part-funded by a grant from the OxLEP Business Elevate programme too. Applying for grants and looking for investors has made us think about our ‘story’ and compelled us to create a good business plan. It has been very positive.”

### Proving yourself right

The Orange Bakery might have begun in a very small way, but has a great future. “Asking for help and talking to people has been the key to a lot of things” according to Kitty. We have learned a lot by speaking to people and found them very happy to share their experiences. Now we want to aim for quality and for our produce to reflect the local area through the ingredients we use.” They have struck deals with Wessex Mill near Wantage and get eggs, cheese and honey from neighbouring villages.

Their next target is to make waste reduction and sustainability part of the business. Kitty has even discovered how to use old bread as an ingredient to increase the maltiness of some recipes.

Alex’s advice to others is simple: “You have to realise that I have a background in education and Kitty is 15. So, if we can make this work, others surely can make a success of their businesses too.”

#### THE ORANGE BAKERY

[www.theorangebakery.org](http://www.theorangebakery.org)

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#theorangebakery

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