



A START-UP FOOD BUSINESS IS RELISHING A CHALLENGE

How business support has made a difference to the Wonky Food Company

Cooking up an idea

The Wonky Food Company, from Combe in West Oxfordshire, is making use of delicious fruits and vegetables rejected by supermarkets to make processed foods like relishes, and preserves. It is the brainchild of John Cavers, his sister Ashley and friend Laura Snook.

As Ashley says: "It's ridiculous to think that something just a little bit wonky is instantly waste! It's a headache for farmers who have no choice but to throw perfectly good produce away. We are putting it to better use. They are delicious."

The Wonky Food Company is about to launch its first three products and there are plans to widen the range.

The business challenges

Ashley Cavers says it has been hard work starting the business from scratch working around other jobs.

"There is just so much to do. It's been hugely challenging but rewarding. We all have some business experience, but it's been a massive learning curve on things like branding, food legislation, and manufacturing."

Support from OBS Elevate programme

“We knew we needed help and one-to-one mentoring with an Elevate Network Navigator identified extra skills and resources we needed including skills in digital and social. And, because money is tight at the beginning, hearing about sources of funding and business support has been excellent too. There has been lots of practical support and we’ve made important contacts which has broadened our support network.”

“The workshops have been particularly helpful. The marketing workshop made us realise how crucial it is to have a marketing plan when you are launching into a very crowded sector. We also realised our business plan needed more work on our financial projections.”

What next for Wonky Food Company?

The Wonky Food Company is working to get more outlets stocking their relishes. It has already secured shelf space at 11 Midcounties Co-op stores and is talking to a number of other interested retailers.

“It’s an exciting time for us and we’ve gained in confidence by having all the support.”

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Understanding more about sources of funding and business support has been excellent because money is tight when you are just beginning. ”

Advice to other start-up ventures?

“Well, based on our experience, I’d say don’t be afraid to ask for help. Oxfordshire is such an entrepreneurial county and you aren’t going to be alone. If you ask for help you’ll realise that support, connections and networking will make a big difference.”

THE WONKY FOOD COMPANY

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W: oxfordshirebusinesssupport.co.uk

T: 01865 897181

E: enquiries@oxfordshirebusinesssupport.co.uk

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