



NAME

ÁINE CUDDIHY

COMPANY

THE MINICAKE COMPANY

TITLE

FOUNDER

If you would like to learn more about Senior Enterprise visit the website www.seniorenterprise.ie

PROFILE ÁINE CUDDIHY



For years Áine Cuddihy dreamed of setting up her own food business. She worked as a primary school teacher for over 30 years before retiring in November 2010. Living in Castletroy, Limerick, Áine's passion for cooking gave her the motivation to take the plunge and set up The Minicake Company in May 2011.

Áine did not set up her own business sooner as she was afraid to give up her safe job as a teacher. Mother to three children, she was devoted to raising her family and helping provide income to pay the bills. With the children reared, Áine's husband ran a guesthouse with her part-time support. Although this business went into decline after the recession hit, it did not affect Áine's entrepreneurial spirit.

Once her children had grown up and moved away from home, Áine found it difficult to cook for only herself and her husband. As a result, there were often too many leftovers, with two-thirds of cakes becoming stale and being thrown in the bin. Áine had a brainwave - instead of making one large cake, Áine started to make small cakes, enough for two people. She was surprised by the response she received from her friends. "When I baked the mini cakes I brought them along to a few friends and their reaction was so encouraging. All their children had grown up and had left home too and they found the size of my cakes to be more than enough."

Áine realised that she could develop her cooking hobby into a successful business. She went to local farmers' markets where she began selling her mini cakes. This proved to be successful, but only when the weather was good! Soon, Áine was supplying cupcakes to two local restaurants in Limerick. Other orders came sporadically for children's parties and other occasions.

Áine's daughter Anne discovered Cake Pops on the internet and Áine decided to try making them herself. Like the mini cakes, Áine brought the Cake Pops around to some friends for tasting. Again, the reaction was wonderful. Over the next few weeks Áine made hundreds of Cake Pops, delivering them into offices

and schools and asking the tasters to fill out some questionnaires. Áine was inspired by the results with ninety per cent of people loving the Cake Pops. The company's first big order came when 400 Cake Pops were ordered for a Willy Wonka themed Ball organised by Griffith College in Dublin.

Áine recently took part in Senior Entrepreneurs - a training initiative for budding entrepreneurs aged 50+, jointly organised by Senior Enterprise, an EU INTERREG IVB NWE supported initiative, and the City and County Enterprise Boards. She learned how to develop practical skills for achieving her business goals and how to grow the business. "The Senior Entrepreneur course was a phenomenal experience for me. I had made an awful lot of mistakes in the past. I learned to market my business better through Facebook and Twitter. Even a week after doing the course, I have secured five new orders and have more than doubled my Facebook followers."

Another company called Boucakery has since been set up by Áine. She came up with the idea of designing cakes that resemble bouquets of flowers. Áine hopes that the bouquets will make a mark within the wedding market. She explains that the bouquets will save money for the Bride and Groom. Instead of buying flowers, a cake bouquet can be displayed on each table. Afterwards there is no need to throw out the flowers, as they can be eaten! She is also targeting the corporate market as they can be adapted to company colours and themes. Áine feels that the lack of financial support available for entrepreneurs is the greatest constraint that is stopping people from setting up a business. Another barrier faced by Áine was her lack of business knowledge. She strongly advises people to look for help. "The first thing I believe people should do is look for support. Go to your local Enterprise Board and see what is available."

Áine believes her greatest achievement to date has been setting up her own business at 60 years of age and the confidence she has gained by successfully doing so.

> STARTING & PARTNERING

> INVESTING & ACQUIRING

> ADVISING & INNOVATING

