



PROFILE
CATHY WHITTY

COMPANY
**CATHY'S SPELT
FOR HEALTH**

TITLE
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE
& FOUNDER**



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senior enterprise

experience never ages

Cathy Whitty's journey from full time housewife and mother of six to entrepreneur started with a shock – quite literally!

Out of the blue Cathy had a severe allergic attack which found her hospitalised. In the days and weeks that followed, she was on an exclusion diet, as she was tested to identify what precisely in her diet was causing the problem. Wheat was one of the items excluded.

Cathy soon tired of rice as her main carbohydrate. Always a baker for her large family, Cathy decided to experiment with spelt flour. She soon produced spelt breads that were low in gluten, high in protein and easily digested, which makes them a very good option for people who are wheat intolerant.

Cathy's first customer was the local health shop, where she had been sourcing the spelt flour. They asked her if she would produce spelt bread for other of their customers who were wheat intolerant. And so a cottage business was born, as Cathy baked weekly to meet the demands of the local shop.

Cathy Whitty's next breakthrough came when her daughter Lorraine nominated her for a "Recipe for Success" competition being run by the supermarket group, SuperValu, and the national television station, RTE. Cathy qualified for the final of the competition, which allowed her to raise the profile of spelt bread and its many beneficial qualities. Following the television programme Cathy was contacted by stores nationwide and individual consumers looking for her breads.

Realising that she could not respond to the obvious demand for her spelt bread from her current facilities, Cathy contacted Wicklow County Enterprise Board to ask for advice. The costs of opening up a large scale production unit were prohibitive, so Cathy decided to outsource the production of home bake bread mixes of her recipes to a reputable mill, to recruit a suitable distributor and to focus herself on marketing and the further development of new spelt products to meet the demand for variety.

Cathy's Spelt for Health range of spelt bread pre-mixes now includes multispeed and wholegrain spelt bread mixes as well



as a flapjack mix for a sweeter treat. The consumer just adds buttermilk or soya milk, the optional extras of honey and yoghurt, and pops the finished product in the oven. Then waits for the compliments! A variety of other new products are in the pipeline. (www.cathysspeltforhealth.ie)

Cathy explains that spelt has a very long tradition. "Spelt was grown originally about 9,000 years ago. It is a Great-Grandfather of oats and wheat. It was an important staple in parts of Europe from the Bronze Age to medieval times. It is now gaining renewed popularity as a health food."

With her daughter Yvonne involved full time and the rest of the family, including husband Eddie, supporting on a part time basis, Cathy has become increasingly ambitious for her new business which is located in the Riverside Business Centre in Tinahely Co Wicklow. "It was always in the back of my mind to do something after the children were reared. But I could not have foreseen how my own business would come about and how it would grow. I now have an excellent mentor from Wicklow County Enterprise Board, (www.wicklowceb.ie) who is encouraging me to look to export my range of home bake products, as there is a clear demand for good quality spelt products."

Asked if she would encourage others to follow her example, Cathy Whitty is unequivocal: "I would encourage anyone who harboured a dream of doing something for themselves to contact their County Enterprise Board and get involved in Senior Enterprise. It is never too late to give it a go. I became an entrepreneur in my late fifties, having never had a business background. I am getting excellent advice and am determined to make a real success of this business – bigger and better!"

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