

— ENTREPRENEUR:	Jocelyn Hancock
— COMPANY:	Jocelyn's Provisions
— KEY INNOVATION:	Introducing world class baking standards to Queensland
— ESTABLISHED:	1995
— NO. OF STAFF:	26



Jocelyn says her farm upbringing at Kilarney, west of Brisbane, provided her with a commitment to good food and business acumen.

Jocelyn Hancock is the founder, sole owner and Managing Director of leading Queensland boutique bakery and patisserie, Jocelyn's Provisions.

In the past five-and-a-half years, Jocelyn has developed a wholesale and retail business which now employs 26 staff and boasts an impressive client list, including Qantas Flight Catering, leading Brisbane hotels and quality restaurants.

Jocelyn says her farm upbringing at Kilarney, west of Brisbane, provided her with a commitment to good food and business acumen.

"From a young age I've had a passion for food and cooking, and was strongly influenced by my grandfather who ran a tight ship and was able to build a successful property portfolio while still being a farmer," she says.

She also credits her success to her strong work ethic, optimistic attitude and the influence of personal role models.

Prior to starting her business, Jocelyn trained as a pastry chef in Brisbane, London and Paris where she worked in top restaurants including as head pastry chef for Australian cooking doyenne, Stephanie Alexander.

It was through this experience that Jocelyn learned about the importance of creativity, diversity, cost control and cash flow. Working overseas also gave her ideas about mixing retail and wholesale establishments to provide ongoing cash flow to support longer-term business development.

Jocelyn has forged a strong relationship with a former employer who has continued to be her business mentor and to provide strategic advice. Jocelyn believes his example has motivated her to succeed.

"One of my employers in England taught me the importance of balancing business sense with technical skill. I realised this man's own success had come from knowing how to take calculated risks," she says.

Jocelyn's Provisions was started in 1996, after Jocelyn spent two years in Melbourne helping establish a similar bakery.

Jocelyn Hancock

"I realised that the effort I was putting in to someone else's business could be spent on my own," she says.

The return to Brisbane was mainly a business decision capital start-up costs were lower than in Sydney or Melbourne and there was market opportunity for a high-quality, European style bakery and patisserie. No high quality patisseries existed in Brisbane at that time.

Jocelyn's business started with \$10,000 of her own money which bought her a fridge and other equipment plus stock, while keeping cash reserves to pay bills in Brisbane's trendy suburb of New Farm.

"I was very frugal and did everything myself," Jocelyn says.

She had to overcome early resistance to "a patisserie who made flourless chocolate cakes without icing and unusual breads".

Jocelyn educated the Brisbane market by personally introducing herself, her cakes and her breads to the wholesale market. She took speciality-cooking classes, door knocked at well known establishments and used her contacts and industry reputation to expand her market presence.

"For the first 12 months, I sold my soul basically because I believed what we made was of a higher quality and so different," Jocelyn says.

Her products struck a cord with retail customers most of whom are in the 40 to 60-year-old bracket. Their feedback, and word-of-mouth marketing has helped make her retail outlet a success.

Jocelyn thinks customers also found appealing the combination of her shop front with a bakery. The 'kitchen meeting the customer' had not been seen in a Brisbane shop for many years.

This New Farm premises remains dedicated to the retail bakery and pastry market, but Jocelyn extended her wholesale bakery with the purchase and refit of a nearby building in 2001. Until this purchase, Jocelyn had never borrowed money from a bank, having ploughed all profits back into the business. Her growing business has also given her an increased administrative load, so Jocelyn is naturally less visible today in the shop front.

Jocelyn's Provisions is now split 50/50 between its retail and wholesale divisions. This reduces the operating risk, supports cash flow and minimises the business' exposure to its large wholesale customers.

Quality ingredients are as important to Jocelyn as the products she chooses to sell. All of her products are chemical and preservative free and are baked in the methods used in the best bakeries in Europe. She buys raw ingredients directly from farmers throughout Queensland because of their high quality products.

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She knows that her employees will eventually apply their training in other establishments and believes that this will only result in a better food industry in Queensland.

“By sourcing from niche providers I believe I'm helping farmers to build their own businesses, while contributing to my own success,” she says.

Jocelyn says that while capital has not been a significant issue, the taxation penalties on growth and employment are creating barriers to potential expansion. She feels 'hamstrung' by pre-paid taxation requirements that 'eat into' her cash flow, and payroll tax, which at this stage has made her decide not to grow her retail network.

She says managing her employees is her biggest challenge, so Jocelyn is careful to only employ staff with an attitude that suits the culture of her organisation and who are committed to creating high-quality products.

The business currently employs five apprentices and because Jocelyn is of the opinion that the local TAFE cooking schools are inferior to those in Sydney, Melbourne or overseas, she spends a great deal of time focusing on training and the professional development of her employees. She knows that her employees will eventually apply their training in other establishments and believes that this will only result in a better food industry in Queensland.

Jocelyn sees in-house training and travel as the keys to ensuring ongoing innovation in her business. Learning from international guests and from the cooking styles and cultural influences in other countries ensures Jocelyn's Provisions products are kept unique and fresh. Consequently, in 2002 Jocelyn took her head baker to Paris to attend an international baking expo, and she often invites guests to present to her staff. This year she also employed a guest baker from Germany to work with her team on an exchange program an experience that has already resulted in a new product range.

Jocelyn says that it is important for her business, like any, to embrace the latest technology and challenges, and to focus on growth and reinvention to ensure continued success. Jocelyn personally encourages innovation through her own hands-on involvement in her kitchens.

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