

A magazine for friends of the Program in Entrepreneurship and Emerging Enterprises

Orange Entrepreneur

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Syracuse University | Martin J. Whitman School of Management >>>>



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School of Management

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Program in
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Tom Kruczek
Plan C

FOCUS ON THE FINALISTS

Winners of the 2009 Panasci Competition

Executive Director Tom Kruczek Keeps the Falco

Bigger and Better—WISE 2009

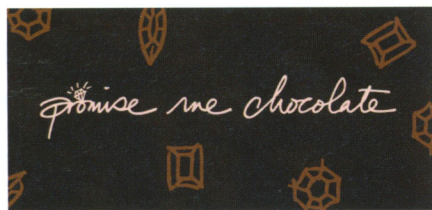
lets in you

a new jewelry business

that melts in your mouth

“When people first see them, they ask, ‘Can I eat that?’ They are pretty amazed that not only is the jewelry edible, but that it tastes so good.”

STACEY VANWALDICK



a year ago, opening her own business to sell edible chocolate jewelry seemed like nothing more than a pipe dream to Stacey VanWaldick of Oswego, N.Y. But after VanWaldick spent time at the Syracuse Community Test Kitchen (COMTEK), located in Syracuse University’s South Side Innovation Center (SSIC) on South Salina Street in Syracuse, her pipe dream began to take shape. Today, she is founder and sole proprietress of Promise Me Chocolate, which sells premium artisan chocolate gems, rings, and bonbons crafted from custom molds and using only the finest chocolate and fillings by Meyers Chocolates of Oneida, N.Y.

“I am very excited about how well received Promise Me Chocolate has been,” says VanWaldick. “People are enthusiastic about how good the chocolate jewelry tastes, and also about how unique they are. When people first see them, they ask, ‘Can I eat that?’ They are pretty amazed that not only is the jewelry edible, but that it tastes so good.”

VanWaldick’s success would not have been possible without the assistance from COMTEK and Lynne Foster, COMTEK’s product development director. Foster led VanWaldick through the steps of taking a favorite recipe and scaling it up for commercial sale. The process of transitioning from concept to saleable product required developing a business plan, troubleshooting and engineering molds, ingredients, processes, and packaging, establishing a target group, and creating a marketing plan.

“Lynne Foster at COMTEK and the SSIC as a whole have been invaluable in the development of Promise Me Chocolate,” says VanWaldick. “They have helped me with everything from finding a co-packer to getting my product on the shelves of local stores. Now, my chocolates are currently being sold at the Village Candy Shoppe in Manlius and Gems Along the Mohawk in Herkimer [both in New York State].”

The seeds for creating edible chocolate jewelry were planted when VanWaldick was studying jewelry making and metalsmithing at the Parsons School of Design in New York City. From Parsons, VanWaldick began teaching art and jewelry making at Oswego High School and was able to hone her idea while earning her master’s degree in fine arts from SU, where she began working with materials other than metal and was introduced to the process of mold making. Mold making and a love of chocolate were both integral components in the development of Promise Me Chocolate.



JULIA RUSKIN



STACEY VANWALDICK

Stacey VanWaldick demonstrating her technique in the Syracuse Community Test Kitchen (COMTEK).

“Promise Me Chocolate is a great example of what COMTEK can help a budding food entrepreneur accomplish,” says Foster. “Stacey had an interesting idea and the passion to pursue it, and COMTEK helped turn that passion into a reality. I’m proud to say all our clients have products in various specialty grocery stores around Central New York, and we are looking forward to helping them grow their businesses even further outside Central New York.”

In conjunction with the SSIC, COMTEK also offers training for accurate costing, pricing, sales and marketing, and other related issues critical for success in the competitive food industry. COMTEK is a joint partnership with the Whitman School of Management at SU and the Nelson Farms subsidiary of Morrisville State College. The project is funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration. ■

For more information about COMTEK, visit www.whitman.syr.edu/eee/comtek

For more information about Promise Me Chocolate, visit www.promisemechocolate.com

“Stacey had an interesting idea and the passion to pursue it, and COMTEK helped turn that passion into a reality.”

LYNNE FOSTER

LYNNE C. FOSTER joined the Whitman School as the product development coordinator for the Commercial Test Kitchen of Central New York (COMTEK) in 2008. Foster assists small business owners to develop and test new food products for resale. In 2001, Foster launched a consulting company, Lynne Foster, Inc., where she serves as the chef product development consultant. Foster has developed concepts into commercial prototypes using flavors and industry ingredients to create menu solutions, new products, and line extensions. In addition to running her consulting company, Foster also led the prepared food services department of Whole Foods Market from 2005 to 2006, and served as the corporate executive chef for the Culinary Center for Excellence for ConAgra Foods in 2003. Foster has worked at Haarmann & Reimer, Givaudan-Roure Corporation, Best Foods Technical Center, and Stouffer Frozen Foods. She holds an AOS from The Culinary Institute of America and a BBA in business management from University of Massachusetts at Amherst.



Lynne C. Foster