



Centre for
Economic Development
& Social Inclusion

InnovateUs



Department for the
Economy
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

InnovateUs is a skills development programme, funded by the Department for the Economy, delivered across Northern Ireland by Belfast Met and the five further education (FE) colleges. The programme provides up to 60 hours of fully funded mentoring (up to a value of £6,000) to companies with less than 50 employees.

The key areas where Belfast Met can offer support to the SME sector include:

- Computing and IT
- Creative Media and Games
- Fashion, Art and Design
- Composites and Advanced Engineering
- Electronic Engineering
- Construction and Engineering
- Food Production and testing

The benefits of this programme are:

- A tailored solution designed to meet the upskilling needs of your business
- Flexible delivery, at your workplace or one of Belfast Met's campuses
- Increased understanding of how innovation can help with the growth potential of your business
- Signposting to additional support if required



98% acquired skills
to innovate in future



70% developed new
products or services



83%
increased
sales



60% improved
customer service

To find out if your business qualifies for InnovateUS contact:

Tel: 028 9026 5069 or Email: cedsi@belfastmet.ac.uk



Case study Madexquisite

About the Company

Madexquisite, set up by Marisol Giardina, is an artisan home-based business which produces sauces and antipasti. With products based on family recipes and ingredients locally sourced, all products are free from additives, preservatives, stabilizers, food colouring, artificial sweeteners, and thickeners. The growing demands for foods that are natural, healthful, tasty and easy to cook at affordable prices provide an opportunity for placing Madexquisite's products in the market.

New Product Development

Due to growing demand, Marisol was keen to continue to develop her range of products by developing low sugar and low salt versions of her recipes. In addition, Madexquisite needed to upscale its production to a commercial kitchen from a home-based kitchen. The aim was to take the products from the family recipe to an industrial standard, without losing the artisan quality and the claims of no artificial preservatives or chemicals.

Project Impact

Marisol was trained in the production process for development of a sugar free Bolognese and a Filletto sauce with vegetable based sweeteners. Taste testing the product range was completed in the College and feedback reviewed to further analyse customer preferences. Once each recipe had been developed, Belfast Met Lecturer, Michael O'Toole worked with Marisol to show her the cooking process that would enable her to scale up production.

As a result of the project the impacts have been:

- 2 new low sugar, low salt sauces developed
- 20% increase in product sales
- Exporting into the Republic of Ireland
- Application for an Innovation Voucher to develop packaging and labelling

"I now feel confident in the new product development process and production of food at scale. The training has helped me review my product range and customer preferences. I now have low sugar and low salt recipes and I am availing of digital marketing support through the College to take the product to market."

Marisol Giardina
Owner, Madexquisite

