



## Lise Madsen – Managing Director, Honeyrose Bakery Ltd – Personal Profile



# Honeyrose

organic handbaking

My name is Lise Madsen, originally from Denmark, but living and working in London since 1994. I am the proud founder and managing director of Honeyrose Bakery, an organic wholesale bakery based in the Park Royal industrial estate in North London. We are growing so quickly that I sometimes forget to look back at what we have achieved so thanks for giving me the chance to do so now for you.

I suppose my story starts where my life began, in the wholesome Danish countryside. I could open our front door and in two hops over my mother's organic vegetable and fruit garden be straight into the fir forests which went for a couple of miles, directly to the sea. One of my first jobs was at a seaside hotel where I managed to convince them, at 15, to let me make desserts in their kitchens. That blossomed my love for fine baking and I decided that was the life for me. I did a bit of research, found Paris to be the capital of pastry, and Gaston Lenotre the king. So at 18, after my baccalaureate, I boarded a train for Paris to join the Ecole Lenotre where I did my apprenticeship as pastry chef and then moved into project management in their catering and food business. I worked there for 5 years and learnt that pure, unadulterated baking craft skills can happily survive in a business employing 1050 people. With that experience in my pocket I made my way to London and continued working in food and food management.

My early dream had been to eventually open a fine pastry cafe, like the ones in Paris, back in Copenhagen. I was working 15 hour days, and though I love to work, I decided that if I was going to work that hard, it may as well be to follow my own dreams. So the summer of 2000 I quit my job, and for 2 months locked myself at home in my small apartment, refining recipes in my tiny kitchen, only venturing out to exploit my friends as volunteer tasters :-). When I felt I had nailed the perfect fudge brownie, the most delectable oat & raisin cookie, and a few others, I spent another couple of months putting together a business plan, again with lots of input and great feedback from friends and past employers that encouraged me to strike out on my own. With that done, I used my flat as collateral to raise funds, had some friends and past employers (again, key to those out there reading this) that believed in me to join me in investing in the startup, and away we went.

I started small with one oven, a small baking mixer and a short lease. I did my own product development, production, sales, and deliveries - all on my blue Vespa, zipping around London. Slowly I added key staff and expanded as our cashflow improved. Over the last 3 years we have expanded our facility space 300%, employ a great team of people, and have our own delivery (lpg) van. One big customer (one of the UK's largest coffee shop chain) found us, believed in us and stuck with us as we grew, and we have formed a great partnership. We have proudly been the only organic handbaked product at Ascot and the Chelsea Flower Show (3 years running), at a couple of palaces, at the Tate Modern museum, and scores of small coffee shops and businesses that want tasty, fresh, quality organic treats.

What sets our products apart ? Great question...luckily, our customers are quick to tell us: we simply taste great. We have won 8 medals at the Great Taste Awards (our Oat & Raisin cookie won the Gold Medal and our Fudge Brownie the Bronze Medal at the 2006 Great Taste Awards). On top of that, we are organic. Sometimes I would like those two facts reversed in our customer's minds, but we are not complaining :-). As the owner, I have the luxury and responsibility of deciding how and with whom we will - and will not, to be frank - work with, and I think that also gives us an edge. One thing we lately have been privileged to be involved with is starting up the [Yellow Flower Foundation](#). We put 5% of our profits into it each year. Our first project was to fund the building of a day care centre in the Philippines, which is happily now up and running as of June 2007, benefiting 150 children and their parents throughout each school year. Our company received the Green Mark award for following environmentally friendly business practices in 2006 and 2007