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Amelia Rope: Delicate. Intricate. Chocolate

October 16, 2013 Tamsin No Comments

There's the run of the mill chocolate. Then there's the smarter chocolate bar with a few more percentage points on the cocoa solids scale. And then there's [Amelia Rope](#) chocolate. It's chocolate like I have never experienced before. Tasting it for the first time is like being Roald Dahl's Charlie as you peel off the cellophane, undo the VV Rouleaux ribbon and open the delightfully chic paper and iridescent coloured foil. Inside you discover the most wonderful chocolate in the most sublime flavour you will ever taste. The need for a golden ticket is far from your mind.

I talked to Amelia to find out more about the woman who is now reputed to be one of Britain's best chocolatiers and discover how it all happened; it's an inspiring story for anyone perhaps thinking they haven't quite found their true destiny in life.



"I would never have said I would end up founding a chocolate business but would have predicted I would run my own business – purely from the way I have been made"

Amelia's life before chocolate saw her have a variety of jobs, mainly PA roles, as well as living in Kenya and the US during her 20's. Significantly she studied nutrition, herbal medicine and was a qualified aromatherapist

which, unbeknown to her at the time, would become powerful inspirations in her chocolate empire.

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“The main turning point came when I went to work as a practice manager for a NHS and private Doctor’s Practice in my mid 30’s.” A million miles from the world of confectionary, Rope found the role very challenging, so much so the head of the Practice suggested she see a business life coach to help manage the diverse and strong characters working there. Little did her manager know how life coach, Merry Graham, would help her tap into her inner potential. Through Graham, Amelia found her self-belief to leave the practice and start her own business.

“I just love playing with flavours and food to create simple healthy dishes, but am definitely not a chef.” Famous last thoughts that didn’t deter Amelia from applying to go on BBC TV’s Masterchef where John Torode told her that she was unique. “I did a few recipes with a twist such as Edaname bean puree rather than pea puree which at that time was not really done”. Despite winning the restaurant round, Amelia wasn’t successful the first time, but was asked to go back on the show again. This time she wanted to go armed and took advice from *Books for Cooks* “the best cookery book shop ever” owner, Eric Treille who suggested she go to Valrhona and do a chocolate course.

“The Valrhona course reinforced my values in food – quality of ingredients, taste, purity with the odd hint of luxury.” And to me this feels like the turning point for Amelia Rope. The moment she got her calling. Even though she maintains she still had no idea that she would run a chocolate business. Thinking instead it was food journalism that she wanted to get into, Amelia sought the advice of a top Food Editor. Wanting to thank the editor for their time Amelia made some chocolate truffles. The Editor was bowled over by them and the epiphany of having her own chocolate business came.



“My ideas develop from visions in my mind – an idea will just appear either as the end product, flavour or taste and then I have to set to it to see if I can make it work.” The first one was her unique crystallised flora. In her visionary way, Amelia saw a rose petal with its lip dipped in chocolate and then decorated with gold leaf. Still working part time she used her days off to create what I can only imagine to be works of art.

“A friend of mine who worked for Conde Nast suggested I drop them off at the national papers and magazines.” This turned out to be a golden piece of advice. Having worked until 2am to get the crystallised flora made, Amelia then drove around London dropping them off and the response was phenomenal .

“They started off in The Telegraph’s Stella Magazine and from there it all snowballed, even appearing on TV and radio!” Quite unprepared for their success, Rope found she had orders coming in, but no kitchen, no cash to get started, no business experience.

“Being me I just got on with it.” Delightful as the crystallised rose petals were, Amelia was savvy enough to realise that the scalability of the flora was limited and packaging would have been prohibitively expensive, so she parked the idea.

“Patrick Reeves, co-founder of Deliverance and now sofa.com, kept telling me to do chocolate bars



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to which I replied – ‘no way, boring and not me’.” He was determined though and commissioned 1,000 bars that would go out with sofas he sold. Amelia relented and in so doing introduced Pale Edition 01 in February 2010. Encouraged by Patrick she also made a supply for the then Head of Food Halls at Selfridges, Ewan Venters. Another golden moment came when he called to say they were right for Selfridges.



“I then drew on my aromatherapy past and conjured up the first lot of my flavoured bars.” Realising she could have as much fun with chocolate bars as making the crystallised flora, her sense of discovery led her to develop flavours such as pale lime and sea salt (my favourite), pale rose and smoked cashew nut. The newly added white chocolate range sounds equally delectable using tempting additions of vanilla, sea salt and pistachio nut.

“The greatest compliment in the early days was by Polly Atkinson of ‘Brides’ magazine who described the crystallised flora as being fit enough for Marie Antoinette’s table. I was bowled over as I have never been trained in anything apart from a secretarial course in all of my life.” But inevitably the highs like these have not been without the challenges too. Amelia would cite these challenges as trying to have the self belief, the lack of personal and financial security and cash-flow issues in the early days. Banks were not at all co-operative in helping with credit, a cause helpfully taken up by Priti Patel the MP for Witham.

“At one stage I moved 15 times in 15 months staying with different friends, and friends of friends, as every penny I had went into a chocolate bar and keeping the business ticking over.” As often happens when you have a dream of having your own business she needed to dig deep to have the self belief she could actually go for it and break away from the conditioning of having a ‘proper’ job.

“I compare having a small growing business to being in a relationship; at times you love it, at times you loathe it, at times it makes you laugh, at other times it makes you cry” But Rope certainly feels that setting up on her own is something she’ll never ever regret doing and she won’t stop until she has taken her business to the potential she feels it so deserves.

“I have an incredible group of friends, some very old and some very new, who have been and continue to be phenomenal supports.” Amelia’s oldest school friend has been her utter rock, as has her brother who housed her free of charge for a couple of years.

“My cubes are my favourite product of the moment. I was inspired by stained glass windows and mosaics”.

Another classic example of how Amelia translates a vision to a delectable reality. And whilst I really hate to mention Christmas in October, the vibrantly coloured, individually wrapped, cubes of different flavoured chocolates make a truly perfect present. The newly added white chocolate range sounds equally delectable using tempting additions of vanilla, sea salt and pistachio nut.



One of Amelia’s favourite sayings is by Milton Berle who said ‘If opportunity doesn’t knock, build a door’. This phrase is so totally apt for this self starting, truly inspiring chocolatier who’s pazazz as an individual, entrepreneurial spirit and sheer natural talent have earned her membership as one of London’s most influential people in this year’s Evening Standard Power 1000. The

sweet taste of success for Amelia must be as delectable as her ingenious flavours of chocolate. I suggest you try for yourself.

Amelia Rope chocolate can be bought directly from her [website](#) or from these [stockists](#) throughout the world.

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