

**A**s a former Masterchef competitor and now head of her own chocolate business, Amelia Rope knows food. We chat to the choccy queen about getting into business, scoffing the goods and embracing a healthy lifestyle.

**How did you get into making chocolate?**

It was a total accident! I went to Valrhona [a French luxury chocolate manufacturer] for a five-day course and was mesmerised by what chocolate was all about and how good quality chocolate was so different from eating everyday



Amelia surrounded by her work! Yum!

# 'I was ploughing through 100g of chocolate a day'

Chocolate entrepreneur **Amelia Rope** tells us how she manages to strike a healthy balance

chocolate. My main aim was to become a food journalist and when meeting a food editor I took some of my chocolate truffles. They seemed to love them and propelled me onto the TV programme *Market Kitchen* to coat and dip truffles. From there I made my unique crystallised flora, which I sent to every food editor and was amazed to get a mention in *The Telegraph's Stella* magazine. However, my route to market was

chocolate bars. A commission from Patrick Reeves (a dear friend and mentor and co-founder of sofa.com who died of cancer early this year) - for 1,000 bars to go out with sofas - and six weeks' notice helped propel me to where I am now. I was also lucky the first store I approached, Selfridges, loved my chocolate bars and launched me.

**Was it tough starting your own company?**

I don't have a business partner or assistant so at the end of the day every decision is mine to make. Every day is a challenge and every day I grow. At times I have gone to bed in tears, and at times I feel under such pressure it is like carrying the heaviest weights imaginable. Without a sounding board who knows me I have times where I look up to heaven and ask Patrick to jump down and guide me! But every job can be tough whether it is your own business or you're employed. I have freedom and that's worth it.

**We hear you're a fan of eating healthily and keeping fit, too?**

I live mainly off a ton of green vegetables, salad, nuts and seeds and then either lean meat, chicken or fish - my weakness is goat's cheese! I go to the gym most days - not only for physical fitness but mental fitness, too. It is a time for me, and it's often when inspiration or clarity of thought happens. I also do a bit of yoga and walk as much as possible to meetings.

**Is it hard to balance being healthy with running a chocolate business?**

Yes! I was ploughing through 100g of chocolate a day, but I have now weaned myself off to about 50g. The other reason I try to be healthy is that I can end up working very long days, which can lead to me becoming run down. I was not very good at that, but losing Patrick this year and another dear friend within eight weeks of each other was the wake-up call I needed.



**Fast talk**

**Fave workout tune?**  
*Eye Of The Tiger* by Survivor!

**Make-up bag essentials?**  
Nars glittery black eye pencil

**Three desert-island must-haves?**  
Fresh drinking water, chocolate kept in a chiller (!), outside communication once a week

**TWEET**  
@ameliarope

**What's your favourite part of your job?**

The people I meet and the places I find myself in through running my business. I also love creating new recipes, designing packaging and marketing.

**Which is your favourite product?**

I love them all, but I suppose I eat the most of Pale Hazelnut & Sea Salt, Dark Hazelnut & Sea Salt, Dark Coffee Bean, Dark Raspberry and my utter sin is White Edition 03.

**What's next for you?**

I have two exciting new products to add to my range for the autumn. Both will be made in Colombia, which means the Colombian people benefit. Usually they sell their beans to chocolate houses that make couverture [chocolate] outside of their country. They therefore lose so much revenue potential. Having the whole product made there will mean they make the couverture, coat the products and then ship them to me to sell. I also hope to push the brand further globally, take on an assistant and do a documentary that I've been dreaming about.

**GET INVOLVED**

You can buy Amelia's chocolate at [ameliarope.com](http://ameliarope.com) and in Whole Foods and Selfridges. Or make your own with [leiths.com](http://leiths.com) or [thechocolatartart.co.uk](http://thechocolatartart.co.uk)

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