

Mike Woods
Chief Executive
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Cake – a matter of Life or Death

- Mike Woods
- CEO Just Love Food Co Ltd
- Married with 3 children
- 2 of my 3 children have severe nut allergy
- Both have to carry Epi pens and both could die from eating just one small fragment of a tree nut or peanut

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Cake – a matter of Life or Death

- Worked in the food industry 30 years
- RF Brookes in Leicester, Supplier of pies / pasties to M&S
- Avana Rogerstone here in South Wales, Celebration Cakes to M&S
- Memory Lane Cakes, Quality cakes to Tesco, Asda, Morrisons, JS, Waitrose, Co-operative
- Had no choice but to say MAY CONTAIN NUTS
- Coffee & Walnut one of best sellers. Made on same production line
- My Kids could not eat any of the products I made!!
- We had to get one of the Avana Team to make our kids' cakes at her home

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- Danika my daughter was diagnosed at 4 with allergy to most nuts, peanuts and horse hair. All of us were then tested and it was discovered my son Rourke had a nut allergy as well. Jamilla, myself and Karen were all clear.
- Danika has been in hospital twice after reacting to a nut consumed without her consent!! Told was ok and it wasn't.
- Rourke has gone through a challenge test under hospital conditions but unfortunately for him allergy didn't improve (encouragingly some do).

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Cake – a matter of Life or Death

- I remember reading a book by Rick Warren – Purpose driven Life.
- Challenged me to think about what is the purpose of my work.
- 40 day process of reviewing what I enjoyed about work, where I was at my best, what had worked and what had not worked over the last 20 years.
- Concluded, I know a lot about cake, I enjoyed most the start up business unit I was given at RF Brookes new site, I know a lot about coping with allergies, my kids hated being different and left out and birthdays are particularly special.

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- Therefore decided in 2009 – I know let's set up my own business from scratch. Celebration cakes that guarantee NUT FREE.
- So I resigned from MD of Memory Lane cake and decided to have a go.
 - Bear in mind I have a wife and 3 kids and a nice Mortgage!
 - Madness or best decision ever made?

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Cake – a matter of Life or Death

- I decided to work with Cardiff Metropolitan University right from the beginning - support with recipes and technical standards.
- I audited suppliers from those who I knew would do well.
- Who you know sometimes is more important than what you know.
- Senior people in Sainsbury's were ex-M&S and ex-Avana and got me and got allergies.
- Buyer in Sainsbury's niece had a nut allergy.
- So Sainsbury's put in writing they would launch 2 celebration cakes nationwide.

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- Went to banks then to look for funding.
- Nat West, Finance Wales (as it was then) agreed to loans.
- And then in April 2010 with 11 people we made 96 cakes on our first day.
- One of the 11 was a Kite Student. Giving us such valuable technical and product development support as we go through this start up stage.

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- Piece of cake since then...
- Not Quite. 2 years later we had grown with Sainsbury's to 5 cakes but Tesco, Asda and Morrisons had not come on board.
- Investors got nervous.
- Banking crisis and lots of start up business failed at this time.
- I was a week away from going bust, had spoken to administrators to set up a meeting.

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- Tesco then regionally said yes in that week having visited the site and seen the people.
- Private Investors then said yes once Tesco came on board.
- 6 months later Asda regional came on board.
- A year after Tesco and Asda Regional teams said yes, their national teams said yes.
- We were starting to gain momentum.

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- Legislation changes – have to declare the 14 allergies in BOLD.
- This was a game changer. The environment towards allergies were shifting.
- Retailers started to come to us.
- In 2016 we were at a junction, nut free alone would not be big enough to build a sustainable business and we were getting lots of letters from people with other allergies saying we cant get a birthday cake.
- We launched Gluten Free / Milk free / Nut Free cakes in September 2016.

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- 2017 we start doing Xmas Cakes.
- 2017 Morrisons come on Board.
- 2019 we start doing egg and milk free cakes (VEGAN)
 - Now 15% of our business
- Now employing 80 people
- Making 100000 cakes a month

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- Not all of our cakes have the same allergen declarations
- We day segregate core categories
- Gluten free / Milk free / Nut Free
- Vegan / Nut Free
- Nut Free (containing Gluten, egg and Milk)
- This requires a top down zero tolerance to mismanagement of allergens

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- Our allergen management
- Robust staff induction – no agency labour
- Regular top-up staff training
- Robust supplier auditing
- Planning procedures
- Segregation procedures
- Good shop floor leadership and awareness
- Won allergy management company of the year 2018 Food And Drink matters

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Cake – a matter of Life or Death

- What's next?
- Soya free – then all 14 allergies will be covered – inclusive
- Packaging reduction – plastic
- Extend free from choice to other eating occasions. Tray bakes, cup cakes, larger cakes, individual portions.

- Thank you. Any Questions ?

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