



Raffaella interviewed at Portobello Business Center

Seeds for Kids – A Success Story

What does Seeds For Kids do?

'We provide food education for children and families. This can be through one-to-one bespoke lessons in a private nutrition consultation, looking at medical and dietary requirements given by health professionals. I design bespoke menu plans, starting with people's likes and dislikes. This approach takes six months and I see the client at least twice a week. If we see something is missing, we provide bespoke nutritional courses. Alternatively, we offer one-to-many lessons. These are at primary school after-school clubs, or with groups of mums or child carers. We have to work two ways to have a healthy child: teaching healthy cooking and providing advice on lifestyle, such as how they eat in the house, whether it is alone, in front of the computer or with the family. My approach is 360° with families, it's a practical approach. I teach them to save time and to make things easier, because lack of time is an issue for people. Everything I do is based on real food, putting hands on food every day. In 15 minutes, you can cook a healthy meal. I offer practical tips to parents: how to handle a reluctant child, how to introduce new food, how to cook in a variety of ways, what is a safe way of eating, which fruits absorb more pesticides.'

Why and how did you start?

'I always had a passion about food. My mum and grandma passed me a tradition of quality, homemade food from my culture in Italy. My daughter was born prematurely in the US and was very weak, so I learned the healthy power of food. She had sensitivities about texture and taste, but I needed her to accept new textures and flavours. I had a second premature daughter. In between the two births, I started a website on premature babies to help parents in the same situation. I was in Milan for the second birth; there, I cooperated with the hospital but in a different culture. In Milan they study the importance of food for a child's development. Then, my father was diagnosed with an incurable cancer. There wasn't much I could do except learn how food could help him through his life in a better way.

I did a course on natural cookery at the Italian Research Center of Oncology in Milan, learning about how food relates to the metabolic rate. I volunteered as a health chef for 12 months, then moved to London. In London, my girls would eat everything I gave them. People would ask "how?" and I saw it

wasn't so easy for everyone. For me, I had the mix of my culture, my studies, my family and my role as a mum. In London, I wanted to take action when I saw how the majority of people eat here.

I went to Leiths Cookery School and completed my diploma in Nutrition in Practice. This completed my knowledge of nutrition, especially in creating balanced meal plans. Because I wanted everything to help children, I also added my own experience, which was to challenge children to try something new. So, Seeds For Kids uses games, stories and legends about food as well as easy recipes. The children don't know they're being taught nutrition, they're just enjoying themselves.

When you look around London, children's food classes are about sugar, pizza or making pretty cakes. It should be healthy, and it can be. For example, we make Easter eggs, but we use 85% chocolate and avocado. I let parents know why my business is different, I let them understand the wonder of food flavours and trying new things.'

What drives you?

'I really believe this makes a difference. The idea has to be a long-lasting change for the child for the future. In the news every week you see an increase in child obesity. I'm driven by training a child to eat healthier no matter what their experience has been before. I have two mottos: 'You don't have to like it, just try it' and 'Food is fun. I used to work in marketing, creating strategies for a technology company. But now I see the wonder in a child's eyes. One of the games we play is: I blindfold the children so they can try new food without prejudice. When they remove the blindfold and see they have just tasted black squid ink, the expression is something lost to us as adults. Food is about enjoying everything'.

This is a Success Story – how do you define success?

'One girl came to one of my after-school classes saying: "I don't want to be here, my parents made me." She came back at the start of this term and said: "I'm here because I want to be here. Aside from that kind of success, there is obviously financial success. Then there is the success of being lifelong; to last as a business and an activity. I don't believe in fast success. You can't teach a child to be healthy by tomorrow morning. Success is to keep insisting on things to produce a real change, for myself and for the children. Success is also to be responsible and sustainable with food in the world. I base my cooking on the Mediterranean diet, which is the most sustainable for the planet.'

How did PBC help you?

'In 2015, after I finished my diploma, I went to PBC. They were very helpful and are such good friends also. They helped me understand how things work in this country, practical things: laws, fiscal advisors, paperwork, registering the company name, networking. They introduced me to the Kensington and Chelsea Business Award, where I was a finalist in 2018. It's really hard to start a business by yourself, so having Colin as my business advisor was very important. Having an expert helped me find the right way, helped me make adjustments and he asked challenging questions. As a woman and as a mother, they helped me a lot to focus on my goals.'

Achievements: Kensington and Chelsea Business Award; Finalist 2018

Website: www.seedsforkids.co.uk

Email: raffaella@seedsforkids.co.uk

Interview conducted and written by Tom Charles @tomhcharles