

DOUBLE ACT

Multi-tasking is a skill most of us can claim to possess but Louise Bolotin finds three women who've taken it further

Ten years ago, when Rosie Sedgwick, 47, and her husband Martin moved to a picturesque village just outside Chester, a neighbour gave her a family heirloom as a welcome gift. The present, a recipe for sloe gin, saw Rosie foraging the local hedgerows for sloes to make the purple liqueur. Soon, her friends and family were receiving bottles of delicious sloe gin as Christmas gifts.

A few years ago, when the sloe harvest was poor, Rosie didn't have enough fruit to use up all the gin, so she experimented with passion fruit. The new gin was a success and Rosie began adapting her recipe for other fruits. The following year, Rosie donated some of her fruity gin liqueurs to a village fundraiser. The next day, she had a phone call from Peter Paprill, ITV's Cheese

Detective and Rosie's neighbour. He told her that Michelin-starred chef Simon Radley was sitting

in his kitchen tasting her passion fruit gin. Simon urged Rosie to turn her gins into a proper business.

"I had no idea where to begin," says Rosie. "But I realised, why not? I've always loved a challenge. I had to work out how to increase the recipe quantities, find bottle suppliers, design labels and apply for a licence to trade alcohol. I also had to buy brewing barrels and special mats to keep the mixture warm, as I was now making quantities far bigger than when I had everything in kilner jars by the radiators.

At every stage I ran into new problems, but I found solving them very satisfying. I did everything on an incremental scale

Rosie has turned her two passions in life into a profitable business



Simon Buckley

without a business loan – each new batch of liqueurs was always financed by the sale of the last batch."

Rosie soon created a range of 14 gin and vodka-based liqueurs. The business, My Gineration, was launched in 2005 when Rosie sold £175 worth of liqueurs in two hours at a village fete, but it was hard work.

"I'd visit pubs, hotels and delicatessens to persuade them to sell my gin. Often, one trip would take a whole day, only to be turned down," says Rosie. "The biggest challenge was getting people to take me seriously. Potential customers would ask to visit my 'plant' and I'd have to explain that my plant was my kitchen. Others supported the idea of small, local food producers. But I gradually established my name. My turnover this year is set to be at least triple last year's. And in July I started selling direct to customers through my website."

Around the time that Rosie set up a business to sell her gin, she spotted an ad for a belly dancing class.

"I went along to an introductory class in belly dancing and I was absolutely hooked. A year later, I stopped in at a gastropub in the Welsh village of Rossett, to try to sell some liqueurs and heard the landlord was hosting a Moroccan evening the following night.

"He joked that the only thing missing was a belly dancer. Before I could think about it I told him I was a belly dancer and he hired me. The next evening I arrived in my belly dancing costume to do my first professional dance. It was a while before I could go on stage but I took it in my stride as I could tell the audience were enjoying themselves."

Following that baptism of fire, Rosie started getting bookings to dance at birthday parties and corporate events.

Says Rosie, "Separating the gin business from the dancing is hard as often I'll be invited to sell my liqueurs at an event and dance too. My family are very supportive of both my careers

and I feel truly satisfied. I'm really proud that My Gineration is part of the growing interest in local produce from identifiable sources. I'd love to grow the business enough that my husband could retire early and work with me so we are truly a family business." ■

www.mygineration.co.uk

AND NOW FOR MY OTHER JOB... Rosie isn't the only lady to forge two careers simultaneously



◆ Sarah Middleton, 29, from Port Talbot, south Wales, is a chartered electrical engineer. Her other job? A patchwork and quilting supplier.

Sarah says, "I was drawn to electrical engineering and I really enjoy it, but my hobby is Welsh quilting and I got sick of craft shops closing. It became really hard to find supplies. I decided to become my own supplier and opened Pelenna Patchworks. I sell to quilters all over the world, mainly on the internet, although I have a tiny shop too. I still do electrical work on a contract basis, which keeps my skills honed. It is very fulfilling to have achieved success in both careers."

www.pelennapatchworks.co.uk



◆ Joanne Thibodeau, 38, works full time at a banking company. In the evenings and at weekends, she helps run Ammolite UK, a jewellery business she

co-founded in 2004 with her husband. Joanne says, "We mostly buy in the silver and titanium jewellery, but I design the ammolite pendants and I also select the ammolite gemstones, which are very rare and beautiful. That's the glamorous bit. The hard work involves dealing with orders and suppliers, marketing the business and serving customers in our shop, which we opened in Stockport last May. It is incredibly hard work finding the time and energy for both careers but it is enormously satisfying. I also love to see the look on people's faces when I tell them I'm a software developer and a jeweller!"

www.ammolite.co.uk