

people A FLAVOUR OF WEST CORK

Allison and the chocolate factory

Allison Roberts and Clonakilty Chocolate is now part of an innovative campaign that aims to make small business ideas happen around the globe. She talks to **Mary O'Brien** about her ambitions.



Indiegogo is the world's most established crowd-funding platform — a process of pooling money from many different people to make an idea happen.

Clonakilty Chocolate is looking for pre-orders through Indiegogo to help buy machines and create a vibrant chocolate factory in the heart of Clonakilty.

Allison hopes to raise €15,000 through orders, which means she will be able to increase current production and get producing from bean by Christmas.

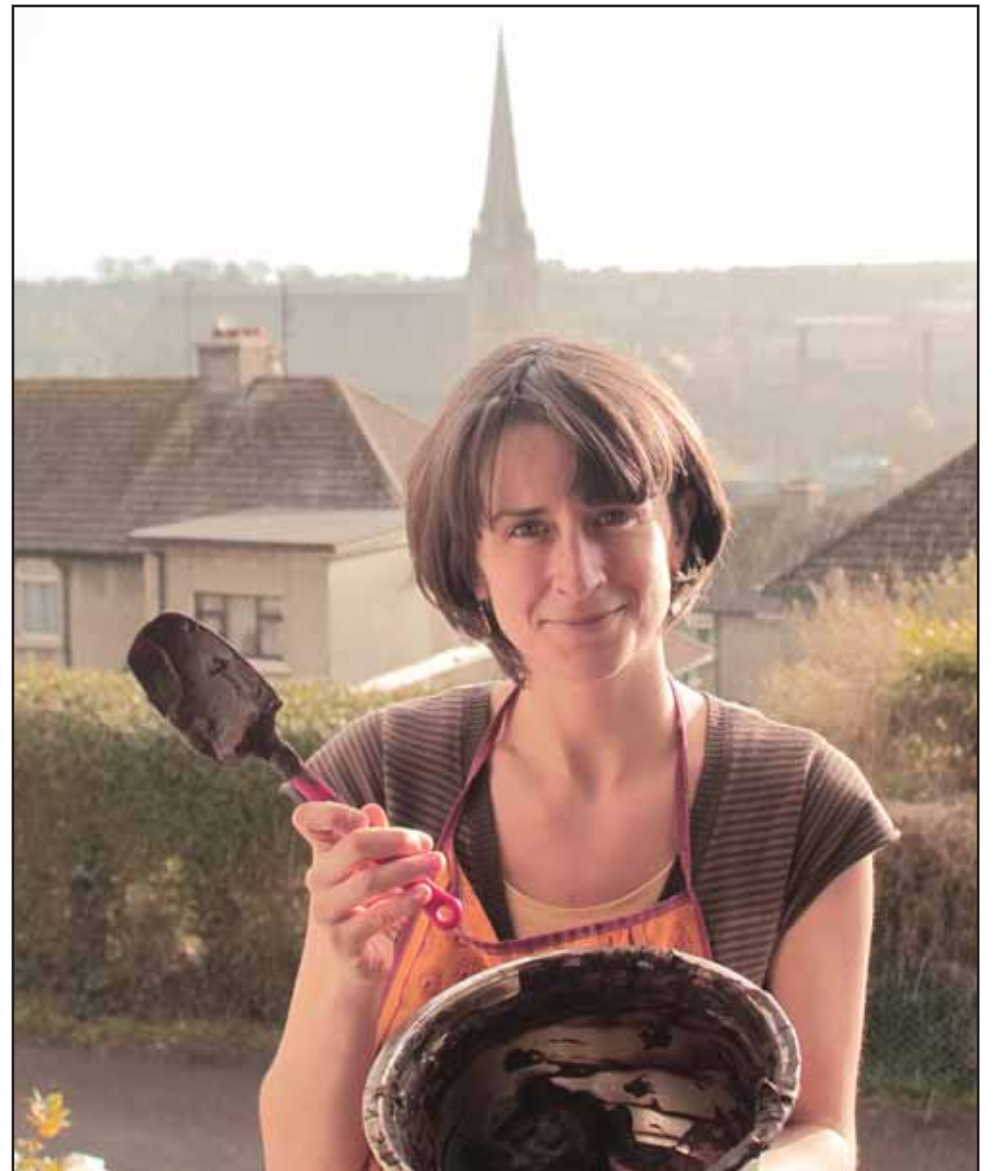
An independent chocolatier for most of her life, Allison started her first chocolate making business at the age of 12.

In 2007, her passion created Clonakilty Chocolate, making fairtrade and hand-crafted products including 15 chocolate bars. Clonakilty Chocolate bars are stocked in a number of small independent shops throughout Ireland but Allison's aim now is to create a vibrant bean to bar chocolate factory in the heart of Clonakilty providing a healthier and ethical alternative to what's available in the mainstream. Most of Clonakilty Chocolate's bars contain at least 70 per cent cacao.

"I've always been passionate about business ethics so the Fairtrade movement is close to my heart. In the chocolate industry, producers are often abused and child slavery and widespread poverty are rife," explains Allison.

Last November, Allison had the opportunity to visit Ghana with the Fairtrade Clonakilty organisation. Here, she met the Fairtrade communities and producers of her chocolate. "Fairtrade chocolate premiums don't just benefit the chocolate industry...money is invested in to new machines, palm oil, textile projects so a whole community develops around a Fairtrade co-operative. Fairtrade communities are able to invest in schools, running water and sanitation facilities."

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it's local area and inspired to see what benefits she could bring to her own community in Clonakilty.

Allison imports her beans directly from Ghana and is a direct link between fairtrade farmers and chocolate lovers in Ireland.

Clonakilty Chocolate's new bars will be made directly from bean, Fairtrade certified and will also use natural alternatives to sugar, resulting in a healthier chocolate bar.

"Ireland is Europe's second biggest chocolate consuming country, and since diabetes and obesity are on the rise like never before (one in four of us are estimated to become diabetic by age 40 by 2020) — and since I think chocolate and sugar don't need to be synonymous — I have decided to focus on

Allison was inspired to see what small, community-minded business can do in it's local area and inspired to see what benefits she could bring to her own community in Clonakilty.

developing my range of naturally sugar-free (and very popular) bars from bean," says Allison.

Allison was recently accepted onto the School for

Social Entrepreneurs Incubator course in Dublin, an eight-month course guiding entrepreneurs who want to develop their business with social responsibility/ethics/community/sustainability weighing in equally with financial stability and development.

"Small is the new big," says Allison smiling. "By pre-ordering through my new indiegogo campaign, you'll be helping my small business have a big impact, both locally and globally."

For more information on Clonakilty Chocolate, log on to clonakiltychocolate.com. Place your preorder and help Allison build her chocolate factory at www.igg.me/at/clonchocolate.

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