

Director of the month

Amelia Harvey

Co-founder, The Collective

In 2010, Amelia Harvey and business partner Mike Hodgson spotted a gap in the UK yoghurt market for a fun high-end product. The pair, who met at luxury-dessert business Gü, pooled Hodgson's expertise in chilled foods and Harvey's retail and sales experience to start their own business.

Then they met New Zealand chefs Ofer Shenhav and Angus Allan, who were looking to expand The Collective, which they had rapidly grown into the country's top gourmet yoghurt brand. Convinced this would fill the gap they'd seen, Harvey and Hodgson agreed to launch The Collective UK as a limited company in 2011.

Starting alone from a small office in Acton, west London, they found a manufacturer in Somerset. "We worked on the yoghurt and changed some of the [New Zealand] flavour profiles to suit the UK."

Their retail contacts helped them launch with Sainsbury's, Waitrose and Ocado in July 2011. But the next year saw a setback. "We invested a lot of money going to [food festival] Taste of Edinburgh. It was the wettest summer," she says. "We took our staff and thousands of pounds' worth of stock and it was called off. Insurance only covers you so far."

A different kind of challenge came soon after launch, when Harvey gave birth to her son. "There were so few of us in the business, I really didn't take any maternity leave. I had him coming to the office with me," she says. But she believes being a mother and a business leader at the same time has ensured a work-life balance. "When you're an entrepreneur, you don't stop – it can be all-consuming. I



make sure I leave the office at 5.30pm each day to make it home for bath time. That's so important to me – I rarely take meetings between 5.30pm and 7pm, and it gives me downtime at the end of the day."

It hasn't hurt growth – The Collective UK now has eight employees and a turnover of £5m, up 100 per cent on 2012. "We're the fastest-growing yoghurt business in the UK," she says. "We're now in over 5,000 different supermarkets, including Ireland and France, and at the start of 2014 we launched into every Co-op in the country."

This year has also seen the company launch new products including a yoghurt mousse and new kids' range and, with two more launches due this month, Harvey and Hodgson are hoping to more than double their turnover again in 2014. "We're launching a beetroot and blackcurrant product as our next limited edition – taking a vegetable which might not be that appetising and mixing it with a gorgeous berry, which is a bit different" she says.

And Harvey sees major potential in expanding the product range and retail base. "The UK yoghurt market is £1.7bn," she says. "Even if we gain a small share of that we would be so pleased."

Though awareness of the brand is still relatively low, Harvey is hoping to boost its power in the years ahead. "In five years' time, it would be great to be up there with the likes of Gü and Innocent as a known and successful British brand in the hearts and minds of the British people."

www.thecollectivedairy.com

My inspiration...

Who? I've met Luke Johnson (who started Pizza Express) and I love his no-nonsense approach.

Which media?

I love to read the papers on my iPad. Somehow it makes it much easier to pick up and read when you find a spare minute.

Best book Seth Godin's *Purple Cow* – I bought copies for all my team. Seth turns traditional marketing theory on its head and makes you think about spreading the word through methods you've never thought of, often with a low spend – so it's



perfect for a start-up.

Favourite place I love LA's positive Californian attitude ... and their wine! My favourite spot is Malibu beach, where my husband and I got engaged.

Brand I've worked with

Waitrose for years and the way they have grown during the recession is inspiring. They support small businesses and are proud of their nurturing approach – and we love being on the end of it!

Influential figure

Natalie Massenet [founder of Net-a-Porter] created a brand that lives and breathes glamour, quality and forward thinking.