



Chin chin to a taste of Africa!

What food would you miss most if you lived abroad? Pork pie? Crumpets? Or perhaps a simple plate of baked beans on toast?

Well for one Nigerian-born businesswoman, now living in Milton Keynes, going without her favourite childhood treat simply wasn't an option so she started making her own and has now turned that passion into a thriving enterprise, thanks in part to a project helping food and drink manufacturers in the region.

Hannah Jolaoso founded Chicsnacks in December 2017, adding her own unique twist to the traditional West-African snack, chin-chin – a crunchy, deep fried pastry – and after receiving technical support from FEAST2 (Food Enterprise Advisory Support Team), the scheme which also offers access to funding, sector events and mentoring to eligible businesses, her confidence is growing as quickly as her product range: “When I was little I would help my mum in the kitchen, kneading the dough and cutting it into the small squares while she did the frying and the smell would always bring everyone running, desperate to tuck into the first batch while it was still fresh and warm” explained Hannah.

“So, while I knew how to make perfect chin chin, I was also aware that I had a lot to learn about all the other elements of running a food business – everything from getting the packaging and labelling right to ensuring the correct shelf life of the products – which is where the project has come into its own for me.

“Indeed, it's also great to know that my FEAST2 advisor is on the end of the 'phone or email whenever I need them so not only have they been a fountain of knowledge but also a wonderful safety net whenever I've had a wobble!” she added.

Hannah now produces a range of almost thirty products, including various flavours of chin chin as well as meat pies, sausage rolls and other savoury pastries and she's convinced that the money she has saved through the project has played its part in that expansion: “I think that if I'd had to pay different consultants for the kind of support I've received through FEAST2 I would have spent a few thousand pounds, but instead I've been able to channel those funds into expanding my offering and perfecting what I do” she enthused.

With plans for a move into designated premises, Hannah says it may not be too long before she's turning to the scheme for actual financial support: “If my growth rate continues at its current level, I will soon be needing to invest in some more equipment, which is where FEAST2 may also be able to help with a grant” she explained.

“Frankly, the whole offering of support from the project is proving to be invaluable and I would heartily recommend any food and drink business to sign up to the scheme and see how it can help them.

“Crucially I’d also add that there’s no need to be worried about the process being too time-consuming or difficult because the team are on hand every step of the way to make the whole thing as easy as possible!” she enthused.

FEAST2 was awarded to the Food & Drink Forum and is worth £3,934,176 in total. It will receive a further £1,967,089 in funding from the European Regional Development Fund as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020.

It is open to eligible food and drink manufacturers within the SEMLEP (South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership) area, covering Milton Keynes, Central Bedfordshire, Bedford Borough, Luton, Aylesbury Vale in Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire.

For more details of the project, including registering your business for the free support that remains on offer remotely through the COVID-19 lockdown, please contact Amanda Askew at The Mallows Company on 01933 664437 or email amanda@themallowscompany.com

Meanwhile for more information about Chicsnacks, including online ordering, please visit www.chicsnacks.co.uk or call Hannah on 07956 566159.

