

Mary McIntosh

Age: 22

Location: Dumfries and Galloway,
Scotland

@MarysMiniBakes



Image: Rural Youth Project

Main Challenges



Poor roads can be challenging when delivering weekly



Limited access to supplies due to Covid-19 restrictions and rural location

Rural Youth Project Involvement

Mary heard about the Rural Youth Project via a friend and social media.

She has enjoyed reading other young people's case studies, in particular those who are running creative businesses across Scotland.

"It's great to see so many rural businesses being set up by keen young people."

- Mary McIntosh

Background

With creative start-ups booming during lockdown, Mary McIntosh is a flourishing example of how young people living in rural areas can successfully set up innovative businesses.

Growing up in a rural area her whole life, Mary has found that having the time to focus on her ideas and passion for baking, has helped get 'Mary's Mini Bakes' off the ground.

"I've always been a keen baker and used to bake for my grandparents when I was young. My Granny Jamieson and Mum are avid bakers, with my granny receiving a BEM [British Empire Medal] for her services to the local community."

After graduating from Herriot Watt University with a First-Class Honours degree in MA International Business Management in June 2020, Mary decided to combine her passion for baking with her drive to set up a business.

What started as a lockdown project to bring a little happiness to those in the local area, has now prospered into a successful rural business, after only a few months.

"I had just graduated and as well as working for the family farming business and Luce Bay Plant Hire, I wanted a little bit of fun on the side for myself, so decided to set up 'Mary's Mini Bakes'.

Mary runs her cupcake business from her home kitchen at Laigh Auchneel Farm, which is situated on the outskirts of Stranraer.

"I announce three cupcake flavours every Sunday, which I deliver to customers' doors every Friday, where possible I use local produce and all my advertising is via Facebook and Instagram.

Background

I use the farmhouse kitchen for which I pay my Mum a small amount of money each week, which helps greatly,” added Mary.

Supporting local businesses is something Mary aims to incorporate into the ethos of her own business.

“There are far too many big, branded items that fill our shelves and our local farmers, growers, and producers do not get enough recognition for their efforts. Hence why I try to incorporate them as much as I can in my cakes.”

As a beef farmer’s daughter herself and helping out on her boyfriend’s dairy farm, Mary enjoys swapping the apron for wellies, which has shown her the value in supporting local.

“It’s great to be involved in both dairy and beef farms, as it makes you appreciate the hard work that goes into producing many products on our shelves. It’s also a great way of sparking ideas and creating a work life balance.

From sourcing local eggs, to using a local graphic designer to create signature Instagram story graphics, Mary has even incorporated the hashtag #supportlocal, into many of her social media posts.

“I use eggs from Auchtralure Farm, allergy stickers and logo labels from WBS Signs, advertising highlights from Emma O Digital Designer, fresh flowers for large cake decorations from Andrea’s Florists and all butter used is Scottish. All of which are within a local radius of the farm kitchen,” explained Mary.

Mary’s personal and professional approach has led to her gaining a great deal of recognition within the local area, with cupcake orders selling out in record time as the weeks progress. The popularity of the sweet treats has led her to reaching just under 1,800 social media followers in just a few months.

Not only are fresh flowers a unique trademark of Mary’s work, but her black Labrador Ollie, is also becoming a rather cute symbol of weekly social posts.

“I think including Ollie, shows a personal touch, even though getting him to pose for photos is becoming a weekly challenge!”

Her love for all things local, has also led Mary to donating boxes of Mini Bakes to a local care home in Stranraer and, most recently, raising £104 from her sales for Wigtownshire Women Aid Cancer, during Breast Cancer Awareness Month.



“I love the city and would love to travel in the future, but I’ll always be a home bird.”





Image: Rural Youth Project

“My rural area is full of local talent and great ideas and things are always changing, which helps spark new content ideas.”

- Mary McIntosh

Background

“Setting up a business in a rural area has been particularly good for networking. Relationships which I have built over the years have come in handy and everyone (usually) is very willing to help and support me.

“I have found it a very exciting journey. My rural area is full of local talent and great ideas and things are always changing, which helps spark new ideas.”

Although, she added that setting up a business rurally was challenging at the start when it came to sourcing all the supplies she needed.

“I relied on a lot of online shopping for buying presentation boxes and cupcake cases, due to Covid-19 restrictions in supermarkets and a rise in people baking at home. You need to be organised and order in advance, as next day delivery is not always a possibility, compared to in cities.

“Also, the roads around here are not great, which makes weekly journey’s challenging especially when delivering a long distance across Wigtownshire.”

Having moved back home, after four years of living in Edinburgh for university, Mary has returned to her rural roots, where she sees her business progressing and her creative eye enhancing.

“I love the city and would love to travel but I’ll always be a home bird. If I ever did get the chance to expand, I would like to keep it personal - I don’t want to lose my personalised and ‘farmhouse baking’ style.” Looking ahead, Mary looks forward to developing her business and exploring seasonal projects, such as her new Christmas products which will be launched in the upcoming weeks.

The highlight for me, is seeing the positive reactions and feedback received from my customers, creating content for my socials, and thinking of new flavours each week. With a sweet tooth myself, my favourite cupcakes have to be Sticky Toffee or Chocolate Fudge.”

To find out more about Mary’s Mini Bakes, visit the below social pages:

-  **Facebook:** Mary’s Mini Bakes
-  **Instagram:** @marysminibakes

Solutions

- 1. Make use of local services:**
The local council proved very helpful when starting up, with regards to regulations and they were very easy to contact.



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