



Bespoke cake chef on a roll

If the biggest order in the world arrives, don't say no, as Richard Tyler reports

EUROSTAR staff and their guests across France yesterday munched their way through 36,000 rich chocolate cakes as they celebrated the train company's 10th birthday.

But the cakes were not, as you might expect, baked in a patisserie in Paris. They were supplied by a small, north London bakery, owned and run by Margaret Islin.

The six-year-old firm, called Just Cakes, usually produces 3,000 cakes a week for the likes of Bagel Factory, Harvey Nichols, the House of Commons and the English National Opera.

"It's enormous – the single biggest order we have done," said Mrs Islin, a trained chef. "Normally we work through a distributor and they order 3,000 a week, so 36,000 was a mammoth, mammoth task." Mrs Islin thinks Eurostar's

buyers contacted her after trying one of her cakes at a Bagel Factory outlet at Waterloo International station in London.

As part of the contract, Just Cakes, which only employs one full-time and three part-time staff, had to pack the cakes in bespoke birthday boxes. The job was so big her husband, Graham, was called in to help assemble them all.

Mrs Islin is typical of the British entrepreneurs who feature every week in the Your Business Starting Out

column. Her advice to would-be business owners is "be open-minded".

"You don't know where you are going to go. You just have to say 'yes' and go for it. Producing 36,000 cakes was a daunting task but we went for it," she said.

The Chancellor wants more people, particularly the young and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to think like Mrs Islin. He has designated the next seven days Enterprise Week, organised by Enterprise Insight, a business-led body that has been given almost £11m to spread the word.

The campaign aims to double the proportion of 14 to 25-year-olds starting their own ventures from 15 to 30pc.

More than 500 events around the country are taking place, with around 3,000 school children from 17 secondary schools in south Yorkshire being bussed to the Doncaster Dome for "visual, drama and motivational exercises".

A 'Policy Summit' is being held today in London, where Mr Brown and Patricia Hewitt, the Trade Secretary, will speak.

The Chancellor's admiration for the US approach to entrepreneurship will also be in evidence this week. The US Treasury Secretary John Snow is due to sign up to a "new transatlantic partnership" to encourage the two countries to work more

closely together.

The 20 entrepreneurs who went to the US in the summer under the Chancellor's New Entrepreneurship Scholarships scheme to learn how to be good at business, American-style, are to tell ministers what they learned.

They had initially been promised a reception with the Chancellor at Number 11, but they have since been moved to the Treasury for an event hosted by Economic Secretary John Healy. Gill Kavanagh, one of the scholars, said: "I hope it will send out the message to get the New Entrepreneurs Scheme widely

known." The scheme pays for entrepreneurs to attend evening classes and gives them a £3,500 grant if they can present a convincing business plan.

Speaking at the CBI's annual conference in Birmingham last week, the Chancellor acknowledged that it would take more than just words to change people's attitudes to entrepreneurship in the UK.

He said he would address a series of questions in his pre-Budget report, expected in the next few weeks.

These included asking if there was strength "not just to talk about enterprise, but to provide the incentives and rewards for risk and agree the changes in education necessary to make Britain's entrepreneurial culture match the enterprise of the United States?"



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Baked to perfection: Margaret Ilsin of Just Cakes supplied Eurostar with 36,000 birthday pastries