

Good advice, Northumberland

Katie Nesbitt and Annabel Tyser of bespoke catering business Thyme 2 Eat, offer helpful advice for future business owners:

- Invest in your local community and give back if you can
- Give back to people that support you including customers
- Don't let other opinions stop you from achieving
- Doing what you enjoy offers more chance of success

Across the country, the COVID pandemic has adversely affected the tourism and hospitality sector. Visit Northumberland has championed real stories from businesses who have adapted, pivoted and triumphed to inspire others. Discover more Northumberland tourism businesses that have delivered a #goodjobnorthumberland.

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Good job Thyme 2 Eat



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If you'd asked Katie Nesbitt and Annabel Tyser about their plans for the coming year in 2019, launching a bespoke catering business in Northumberland would not have been top of their replies. However, lockdown presented the entrepreneurial friends with time and space to focus on what they truly wanted from their careers, and a business born out of passion was created.

Q: What were your plans going into 2020?

We definitely did not expect to be in this position. Katie was travelling in Melbourne before returning for university. Annabel was doing a business diploma in Oxford with plans to move to London after graduation. The idea of a cooking business came about one July morning in Katie's kitchen. We were so hungover while cooking brunch, a bacon roll had never tasted so good. The next day we made a huge batch of traybakes and sat in the sun on Holy Island with the expectation of making millions. The first day was a big success so we went into day two with high expectations. By lunchtime we'd eaten five traybakes each to make it look like we'd sold something. We both thought it isn't working. But it inspired us to plan bigger things including private hire, events and holiday cottages. Thyme 2 Eat was born.

Q: How did it feel starting a COVID business?

Everyone had their say from, “why start a cooking business during a global pandemic?” to “rather you than me” to “you’re too young”. But for us it was the best time. It was quiet and this gave us the chance to get on our feet and explore what we wanted to achieve. If it wasn’t lockdown, we’d have started summer 2021, naïve, unconnected, and cautious. Now, we have six months in the bag, planned and ready to go.

Q: Tell us a bit more about the business.

We take pride in sourcing our produce locally and supporting the many fantastic small businesses in Northumberland and the Scottish Borders. Whether you’re looking for supper for two, a hassle-free dinner party or a week away with private chefs, we’ve got you covered.

Q: What were the toughest battles you faced?

Winter, especially January. We were back into lockdown and there wasn’t any sight of reopening. We were beginning to lose hope. Also, it was tough deciding who our target market was. Stick with just holiday cottages? Private hire? Or both? We knew we were capable of taking it all on, it was just deciding how we were going to manage it.

KEEP GOING

Q: Did you ever feel like giving up?

The winter months were definitely a challenge. We never had an open conversation about it, but having been asked this just now, we both did think about putting Thyme 2 Eat on hold until things looked better.

Q: What kept you going?

The Northumberland and Borders communities supporting us, even in the winter months when no one really felt like doing anything (us included), we still had orders coming in. The other thing that kept us moving was the preparation for summer, talking about what we were going to do, how we were going to do it and knowing better things weren’t far away.

Q: What support did you receive?

We’ve had incredible amount of support from locals in Northumberland and the Scottish Borders which have really helped Thyme 2 Eat grow. We’ve also received a huge amount of support from both our families, and close friends. We are extremely grateful for this.





THE RESPONSE

Q: Was there a specific moment that gave you hope?

The turning point for us was the opportunity to work closely with four holiday cottage companies based within Northumberland and the Scottish Borders after starting with just one. This gave us both a huge boost of confidence and hope.

Q: Have you made any changes during lockdown?

Changing our name from K and A Catering to Thyme 2 Eat has made us feel much more professional. We've created 'Thyme 2 Takeaway' from this and have plenty more ideas up our sleeves.

GOOD ADVICE

Q: How important is investing?

Making sure we invest in our community and supporters is very important to us. We started a mailing list and everyone who signed up was given 10% off their orders. We donated cakes to the NHS in Berwick and a huge donation to the BGH, Melrose.

Q: What advice can you offer other business owners?

Do what you enjoy. Don't be put off by the challenges you face. Bigger challenges offer bigger rewards. Don't let other people's opinions stop you from pursuing what you want to achieve in life.

Q: What do you love about being a business owner?

The freedom to take it wherever we want. If something isn't going right, we have the power to change its direction. Doing something you love gives you more chance of success. You only have yourself to blame, so you put everything into it. The reward is even more worthwhile when you know you've earned it yourself.

Q: How would you define doing a good job?

As long as you know that you have tried your best, then you've done a good job.