

Entrepreneur Profile

**ALISON BAILEY
VERCRUISSE**

**FOUNDER
AND CEO,
18 RABBITS**



What it does: Makes handmade granola and granola bars with organic and artisanal ingredients
HQ: San Francisco.
Employees: 4.

Founded: 2003.
Source of startup capital: Family and friends
Background: Five years in banking with Federal Reserve Bank in Chicago. Consultant for dot-coms in San Francisco.
Residence: San Francisco.
Age: 37.

Big picture

Reason for starting business: I didn't find any granola that I liked on the market so I decided to create my own. It was really inspired by my mother.

Most difficult part of decision: I knew that this was something I was born to do. From the time I was very, very young, I was always in the kitchen.

Biggest plus of ownership: I make my own schedule. I'm a very creative person and ideas could come to me at 3 a.m. and I can get up and start working on them.

Biggest drawback: I never stop. It's always on my mind — I'm dreaming about it, I'm writing about it.

Biggest misconception: Starting a food business — it's a lot of hard work. It's literally manual labor.

Biggest business strength: I'm resourceful. I have experience doing a lot of different business disciplines, but I know where my limitations are and where I need help.

Biggest business weakness: I'm an introvert, so going out and developing relationships, I have to nudge myself.

Biggest risk: We opened a kiosk in the Ferry Building in November 2005 and there was no kiosk. We were the guinea pig. They were literally trying to see if businesses could work in the hall. Overall, we decided that retail wasn't really our forte so we chose to focus our efforts on the wholesale side.

Smartest move: Packaging the granola. I started buying different fruits, eggs and butter from the Ferry Market and making organic scones and muffins at 4:30 in the morning and driving them to cafes. I would go to a kitchen in SoMa at hours when people still hadn't gone to sleep. My husband just said, "Why don't you just package the granola?"

Biggest worry: I try not to worry. I don't think worrying helps anyone.

Top source of inspiration: Seeing a

child enjoy 18 Rabbits.

Daily routine

Most challenging task: Asking people for money.

Favorite task: Landing new accounts and developing new products.

Least favorite task: Putting together sample kits and mailing out orders.

Biggest frustration: I wish there was more time for follow-up with different sales leads or customers.

Source of support in a business crisis: My husband.

Dreams

Key goal yet to achieve: Solidifying our brand. We just changed our name to 18 Rabbits.

First move with capital windfall: Make our forecast even bigger than we have already projected.

Five-year plan: An international presence. Expand beyond granola into other baked goods using things like spelt, buckwheat and amaranth — ancient grains.

Inducement to sell: It's definitely not the time.

First choice for new career opportunity: A magazine writer, fashion designer or hosting a travel and cooking TV show.

Personals

Most-admired entrepreneur: Robert Redford.

Most interested in meeting: Bono.

Stress reducers: Yoga and meditation.

Favorite book: "The Josephine Bonaparte Collection" by Sandra Gulland.

Favorite film: "Bridget Jones's Diary."

Favorite restaurant: Nopa.

Favorite destination: I don't think I've been there yet.

Automobile: Cannondale S3 (my bike).

— Ilana Fried ■