



**“People coming in and telling me our chocolate is fantastic is the biggest reward”**

**ISABELLE CHAPPELL, 52, lives in Hitchin, Hertfordshire, with her husband, Robin. She has two grown-up daughters.**

**THE IDEA** I was running an accessory franchise in Paris and in the same road was a gourmet chocolate shop. I became interested in making my own chocolate, so I sold the business in 2005 and began to train as a chocolatier.

**WHAT HAPPENED NEXT** I did several courses that cost between £2,500 and £3,000; income and savings paid for them. I hit on the idea that people could choose how much chocolate they wanted by weight, then we'd put them in a bouquet, wrapped in cellophane and ribbon. By this time we'd moved back to the UK and found premises in London to open Chocolat Chocolat.

It meant an outlay of £120,000 revamping it, which we funded from savings, a £60,000 bank loan and a contribution from the landlord. In two years, we recouped our investment and opened a second shop in Cambridge.

**WHERE I AM NOW** I make about 30 per cent of our stock and import the rest from France and Belgium. We make our chocolate in the shop window, which is a huge draw, and I've started running chocolate courses. I earn a salary of £15,000.

**THE FUTURE** We're going to launch a website.

**BIGGEST CHALLENGES** The economy; people aren't buying large quantities and leave Christmas gifts to the last minute.

**GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT** Establishing a chocolate brand.

**BOOST YOUR EARNING** Don't underestimate how much cash flow you need. It's always more than you think.

*chocolatchocolat.co.uk is launching soon >>*

#### **BUSINESS IN FIGURES**

**LAUNCHED** October 2006

#### **START-UP COSTS**

London shop £167,000;

Cambridge shop £153,000

#### **CURRENT TURNOVER**

£300,000