

Shakuntla Sirdaw



An instinctive entrepreneurial spirit led her to form a company to teach and demonstrate the method of cooking that inspires her

From computing to cookery

Passion

Shakuntla joined the *Forward Into Self Employment at Fifty* course a few months before she started her business – *Food and Mood's* first holistic Indian food cookery class. She is passionate and outspoken about the need to bring home cooking back into our daily lives. She intends to pass on that enthusiasm to others, busy lives or not, by proving that cooking good food need not take up much time.

'I am appalled at the lack of connection people make between what they eat and how they feel. One needs an intuitive sense of the make up of the food. I don't just want to do catering alone as it can be a soulless business. Cooking, on the other hand, is a very precious art.'


Leap of faith

Shakuntla has always been inspired by the entrepreneurs in society and felt fettered by her very responsible job in computers. 'I like to chase things, make them happen and enjoy the thrill. Richard Branson is my hero. Every time I read about people doing things under their own steam, I feel excited. I've always felt this way.

'I left my job when I was the envy of others. Here I was, a woman responsible for the whole set up, maintenance and project management for the whole institution I was working for. Yet still there was something lacking.

'I knew I would be happier on my own. Now, over fifty and with fewer responsibilities at home, is as good a time as any to do it.'

Food and Mood

A photograph of Shakuntla Sirdaw in her kitchen. She is wearing a red patterned top and a white apron with red polka dots. She is smiling and holding a plate of fresh green herbs. In the background, there is a kitchen counter with a blender, a pot on the stove, and a window with blinds.

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Positive Learning

Forward at Fifty was a learning curve and a sounding board for Shakuntla, an opportunity to exchange ideas in the company of her peers. 'The Forward at Fifty course was practical, informative and more importantly, good fun. I made lots of connections and met lots of people on the same track. It was confidence building.'

A journey

Shakuntla is convinced that more women over fifty should have access to courses such as Forward Into Self Employment at Fifty.

'I've met some very interesting people who have opened up my way of thinking and how I can develop my business. It's been great to meet like-minded women.'

Momentum

Like many new businesses, Shakuntla is finding that maintaining the momentum of a good start is tough and has even changed her personality a little.

'Maintaining enthusiasm is hard. I have to come out of my comfort zone. The corporate culture of my entire working life has deposited debris which is very difficult to shift. The course has been fantastic in providing me with tools to help me to change my mindset.'

Determination

Shakuntla is determined to succeed and prove her initial detractors wrong. 'People make fun of me. They say that going from computing to cooking is not a great promotion. Do I care? I feel as though I am on a journey. I know where I am heading. I have short term and long term goals for Food and Mood and I am taking one day at a time.'

'Yes, it is a struggle and a lot of hard work, but the money is coming in and I am happy.'

Her advice to women over 50 thinking of starting up? 'Keep it up. Keep your dream alive. There are so many exciting opportunities out there and you can't afford to miss them!'



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