

The Bold, the Brave, and the Daring

Share / Save

Nadja Piatka

Founder and President of Nadja Foods

While hiding under a table with her daughter as a bill collector banged on her front door, Nadja Piatka realized she had to do something to climb out of the rut she was stuck in. Her husband, a wealthy dentist, had left her for another woman, and the house was mortgaged to the hilt. She was bringing up two children on her own. Debts were mounting, and despite repeated job searches, no one would hire her. Crouched on the floor that day she felt humiliated that her daughter was witnessing such a low point in her life.



As the bill collector's footsteps faded into the distance, Piatka, determined that she would never feel like that again, sat down and wrote out a list of goals. That list was her launching pad, and armed with just \$100 and one big idea, she set about creating her multi-million dollar food company, now an international supplier to Subway, McDonald's, and many more.

Recipe for success

With a lifelong love of food and cooking, she decided what the world needed was better tasting, healthier food—including a low-fat muffin. So, she started work in the kitchen, experimenting with different recipe ideas and using her two teenage children as taste testers. Eventually, she came across the perfect ingredients and her low-fat, low-calorie, tasty muffin was ready for the market.

Piatka loaded boxes of muffins in her car and sold them to coffee shops in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, where she lived. She had no prior business knowledge, but she made deals with the storeowners that they would offer free samples and give her 10 cents for every muffin sold. They flew off the shelves. They were so successful that more stores wanted to sell them.

Demand grew

To keep up with demand, Piatka got up every morning at 4:00 a.m. to bake, and then she climbed into her car to make sure the muffins were in the coffee shops by 8:00 a.m. She realized she had a sellable product, but her growth was limited because she was working alone. So, she outsourced, finding a local bakery that had spare capacity in the ovens. The bakery signed a confidentiality agreement that she came up with on her own from an old aerobics waiver.

Now she could concentrate on marketing to get her name known. She approached a local newspaper and offered to write healthy meal makeover recipes, but they turned her down because she wasn't a certified nutritionist. She offered to write them for free, and if the response was favorable, they could then pay her. The column was a hit and the editor paid up.

From muffins to millions

Piatka was also selling the muffins region by region, and the first big sale was to McDonald's Canada. From there, her business exploded and the muffins made her a mint, raking in \$2.5 million a year. She continued to dream big and managed to get her brownies into Subway. Now, the company is making around \$20 million per year. Piatka is also successful in other fields. She's written two best-selling books—*Outrageously Delicious Fat-Wise Cookbook* and *Joy of Losing Weight*, appeared on numerous TV shows, and created the Ultimate Girls Getaway, where she hosts women's events at luxurious resorts to raise funds for women survivors of war.

The baked goods guru still has that original list of goals, though a little dog-eared now. The list reads: "I will own a national company, I will be a best-selling author, I will have my own newspaper column, I will be a public speaker, I will have my own television show, and I will bring value to people's lives." Through sheer hard work, drive, resolve, and a clear sense of purpose, she has accomplished them.