



MY START UP MAGAZINE

KEEPING YOU
INFORMED &
CONNECTED!

CATCHING UP
UPCOMING EVENTS
MONTHLY TIP & TALK BACK

CATCHING UP

THIS MONTH WE CATCH UP WITH MELISSA JAMES, CREATOR OF EAST END VEGAN, AND SPEAKER OF OUR FIRST POST-PROGRAM SUPPORT SESSION



Hi, Melissa! Can you provide us a brief snapshot of your business?

My name is Melissa and I'm the owner of Eastend Vegan where I make Vegan Cheeses and spreads using Almonds. I made this for people who are looking for a dairy free alternatives to cream cheeses, spreads, dips and ricotta. My goal initially was to bring more dairy free options to the Scarborough area, where very little vegan options exist. Now I focus on simply bringing my product to people who feel its hard to access veganism or a healthier lifestyle because they don't like the taste or feel its too expensive. My products meet both of those needs!

In your entrepreneur "toolkit" what do you think is the most important tool to have?

It's most important to have people to talk to about your ideas, to show them your work so they can give you feedback and to push you/ support you to move forward towards your goals. It's important to have very key people that you trust, who will share resources with you to move forward and embody the ambition and drive you want or have as well.

My mom, dad and my partner are the most committed and ambitious people I know, they start projects from scratch, commit to learning and they are creative thinkers. They inspire me to keep going when I question my business and whether I'm ready or not. You absolutely need that core group of people and it could be family, friends or other business owners. Whoever it is, make sure they inspire you to create and take action.

Photos:
Above: Melissa James of East End Vegan
Bottom: Participants of My Start Up listening to Melissa share her knowledge



What advice would you give to an entrepreneur who fears they may be entering a saturated market?

If you're fearful, do research around that market. That means you want to look at the competitors or do a SWOT analysis and assess for what's missing, so you can fill that gap. If you don't see a need being met, then that means there's space for you! Remember there are 7 billion people on the planet so there will always be someone who needs what you have. The second thing is to really ask yourself if you're willing to do the work to create a space for your business in that saturated market because it will take time and it will be hard and you have to be committed to this for at least 5 years before you see your work pay off. Its a lot like finding your voice to speak up, this is a similar process to making space for your business in the business world.



How do you organize your time as an entrepreneur?

I struggle with this till today! But I recently found something that works. I use google calendar on my phone to enter events and obligations with other people involved. What has also helped me a lot is scheduling my schedule. That just means I set a time to have a schedule and a time for no schedule so I don't feel overwhelmed by the entrepreneurial journey and the idea that I need to work ALL the time. During the schedule, I write out what tasks I want to complete and I allocate a realistic time to complete it or at least get through a part of it.

Do you feel self-care should play a role in an entrepreneur's regime? If so, how do you incorporate self-care?

ABSOLUTELY!!!!
The story of entrepreneurship has been skewed in a way where it appears inaccessible to the average person and it's not true. There are so many ways to build a business and I know based on my first hand experience and articles I've read, that self care is an integral part of business. We are people first which means time for nurturing your personal desires and your mental health are necessary to living a fulfilling life. If you don't feel fulfilled in your life then you won't have any drive or creativity to grow and nurture your business.

I incorporate self-care by setting times to meet with friends, I take mornings to meditate and to breathe. Whenever I see a mirror I talk to myself and say positive things, check in to see how I'm feeling and just boost myself. On the other hand I write, so when I get home if I feel like writing I do it and I tell myself when I'm going back to working. Trust your body (heart and body) because it will tell you when you need a break and it will wake you up to tell you "go to work!" But also take time to build the relationship with your body so you can hear those messages.

Any final words for a woman who may need a boost to get started on her entrepreneurial journey?

Just do it! Or AOL (Action oriented living - my partner says that), less thinking more doing. I say this because we can get so comfortable planning every detail because it feels like you're doing something but until you take that first step and second step and third step and keep stepping you haven't become an entrepreneur and you're not nurturing the body anymore either. Fear isn't real but I understand it feels real. Likely it comes down to a fear of rejection and you need not be worried about rejection because you've already dealt with that your whole life and you're still here. You're ready for this, have fun with it and take your time on each step.

Where can we find your products or stay in touch with East End Vegan?

You can find all of our products on www.eastendvegan.com and find us, connect with us through [@eastend.vegan](https://www.instagram.com/eastend.vegan) on Instagram and [facebook.com/eastendvegan](https://www.facebook.com/eastendvegan) or send me an email melissa@eastendvegan.com



UPCOMING EVENTS



@EFRY

MENTORING SESSION #4 MAR 11

10 am - 12 pm
Focus Group
12:20 pm - 2:30 pm
Facilitated by Blueprint
Elizabeth Fry Conference Room

POST PROGRAM SUPPORT SESSION #2 MAR 17

5:00 pm - 7:30 pm
463 Carlaw Avenue
Toronto, ON M4K 3H9

WELLNESS WEDNESDAYS APR 1

5:30 pm - 7:00 pm
Hosted by Warrior Yoga
Elizabeth Fry

MENTORING SESSION #5 APR 14

10 am - 12 pm
463 Carlaw Avenue
Toronto, ON M4K 3H9

POST PROGRAM SUPPORT SESSION #3 APR 22

5:00 pm - 7:00 pm
463 Carlaw Avenue
Toronto, ON M4K 3H9

IN YOUR COMMUNITY

STARTUP SCHOOL: CONTENT MARKETING FOR THE SCRAPPY ENTREPRENEUR MAR 10

Ryerson University Student Learning Centre
312 - 341 Yonge Street
Toronto, ON M5B 1S1

PITCHITTOCITYHALL MAR 12

5:00 pm - 9:00 pm
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS NETWORKING BY THE HIP HAUS MAR 18

5:00 pm - 9:00 pm
Northern Maverick Brewing Co
115 Bathurst St
Toronto, ON M5V 2P9



Be flexible and listen to the market. Even if you nail down the perfect niche, it won't necessarily remain the same forever. Markets can be fickle and consumers want to be on the cutting edge. If you can't pivot and react when the winds of change come, you'll be blown away.

TALK BACK!

Anything you want to see in the next issue? Talk back to us and let us know by February 23rd!
Send your ideas by email to: dthompson@efrytoronto.org

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**“WE NEED TO
ACCEPT THAT WE
WON’T ALWAYS
MAKE THE RIGHT
DECISIONS, THAT
WE’LL SCREW UP
ROYALLY
SOMETIMES—
UNDERSTANDING
THAT FAILURE IS NOT
THE OPPOSITE OF
SUCCESS, IT’S PART
OF SUCCESS.”**

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON, CO-FOUNDER OF THE HUFFINGTON POST



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