

Dad creates 'The most inclusive doughnuts in the UK' so children with allergies don't miss out

Ryan Panchoo says seeing his young children miss out on treats because of their allergies left him heartbroken – so he started a business to make what says are the 'most inclusive doughnuts in the UK'.

CEO and Founder of Borough22 Doughnuts, Ryan , began the company after both of his children, then two and six, were diagnosed with complex dietary requirements. Irritated at at the lack of dessert options for his children, and realising that many other people faced similar issues, Ryan decided to start making his own sweet products.

His brand now offers gluten-free, vegan, low sugar, Halal and Kosher certified products that are all available online and in-store in Selfridges, London. And he hopes Borough 22 is "probably the most inclusive donut company in the UK, if not the world".

Ryan was inspired to start his doughnut journey after seeing his children with multiple allergies miss out on treats because dairy free products often had gluten in and vice-versa.

"To get something that was multi allergen free was very hard to find," he said. "The children were going to these places with all their friends. They'd have playdates or any kind of activity, food would be involved, usually treat foods. And they would go to these spaces and they would see their friends having all of this amazing food and they couldn't get involved.

“So it broke my heart. They knew that they couldn’t do it, but they didn’t understand why. And it was very hard to explain to our two-year-old why you can’t have the same food that your friends are having.

“I started the company based on three pillars. I wanted to provide something that was safe for them to eat first, first and foremost.

“I wanted something that was visually appealing so they and their friends would naturally gravitate towards it rather than thinking ‘this is their food and this is our food’.

“And then finally I wanted to not compromise on taste. With so much of the food we had found that we were able to buy and eat, we paid over the odds for it, number one, and then when we tasted it, it was just such a disappointment. So I wanted to break that stigma. And that’s what we achieved, just providing that opportunity for them to go to city spaces, to have food that people bond over, being able to experience it together with everybody else and not feel left out.”

Ryan started Borough 22 as a “side hustle” but was inspired to go full-time after an employer in a similar management role told him “If you don’t take this opportunity, you’ll really regret it”.

After being made redundant at a previous role, he recalled: “I had a lump of redundancy money and I thought, yeah, it’s now or never, let’s see how far we can go.”

The name was inspired by his time in New York. That city is famous for its five boroughs, London is also a city of boroughs – and at the time he started his business Ryan lived in Plumstead in the Royal Borough of Greenwich. Wikipedia listed that as London’s 22nd borough – and the result was Borough22 Doughnuts.

The company’s key outlet is Selfridges, where Ryan’s doughnuts

have been on sale for more than nine years. Ryan says he has developed a great relationship with the store and its teams, and has worked with the company to train staff in allergy awareness.

He said: "It's raised awareness of how necessary our brand is. There are so many people out there who are undiagnosed, and so many people out there who are diagnosed not just with a single allergies with multiple allergies.

"So there is a definite need for us, but then with the standard of our donuts, we're not alienating everybody else. We're not disappointing anybody else like we used to get disappointed when we went out."



A box of Borough 22 doughnuts, made by Ryan Panchoo
(Image: James Moyle)

He added: "We find that you'll come to us because someone you

love or someone you care about has an allergy, if not yourself. And when you come to us and you see how good they are ... then you'll say 'well, why am I going to go to 2 or 3 different outlets? I'll just go to this guy because his doughnuts are banging'.

With the arrival of Black History Month, Ryan has been inspired by his family's history in the island nation of Grenada to create a Grenadian-inspired selection box.

Ryan says Grenada is known as the "isle of spice" – there's even a nutmeg on its flag – and he loves talking about the cacao pods and mangoes he's seen on his visits to the country. So he has created isle of spice ring doughnuts, a mango glazed doughnut, and a chocolate and plantain doughnut.

Ryan's proud of his 10 years leading Borough 22 – and now his ambitions are global. He said: "Allergies are not discriminatory. They affect everybody all over the world."

He said he's had inquiries from as far afield as the Middle East and the USA. And he smiled: "So I think we'll conquer London, conquer the UK, edge into Europe and then beyond. I could see us selling these doughnuts and having our brand across the world."

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