

## Case Study:

# Young Entrepreneurship in the Field of Food - Linnea Strand and LivsVinn

Linnea Strand is a young entrepreneur in Närpes, Finland. We're visiting her an afternoon in November, in her shop LivsVinn where she is selling food that would otherwise have ended up as food waste. Food waste refers to food that is fit for consumption but consciously discarded at the retail or consumption phases.

The atmosphere in Linneas shop is warm and welcoming, and we sit down in the cozy café part for a coffee while customers come and go. There is a constant buzz with customers, Linnea and her employee Samantha working at the cashier exchanging information about prizes and Linnea saying hello to customers entering the shop. There is an abundance of different products in the shop, nicely put up and making you want to explore everything a bit closer. Right now, the Christmas season opening is approaching and the shop is being decorated and seasonal products are put on display.

Why did Linnea choose to become an entrepreneur? "I've always known that I'd become an entrepreneur", she says, "I've grown up with a family business, my parents grow vegetables in a green house. That's also why I know how much second-class vegetables there is and how much that ends up as food waste. We used only second-class vegetables ourselves, when I grew up." From the beginning, Linnea did not have a clear idea of what kind of business she'd like to start. She attended secondary school for the matriculation examination, after which



November

JULEN HAR HITTAT HIT

★ PEPPARKAKOR

★ JULIG MARMELADGLASS

★ ÄPPELMUST

★ BAKTILLBEHÖR

★ JULLIMPA

MIDDAGSBOXAR:

★ Biff Stroganoff  
Lilleshovs Rotmos

she headed off to university. She chose the Hanken School of Economics in Vaasa. "I applied to Hanken to get a broad education. If I don't want to continue with entrepreneurship sometimes in the future, I've still got many doors open", she says. Linnea graduated as a Master in Economics in 2019 with a major in Entrepreneurship and a minor in Accounting. She also studied Commercial Law, always with the ulterior motive of starting up her own business.



While working for an accounting firm and finishing her Master's thesis, Linnea started to plan her business. She visited the regional development company DYNAMO, that helps entrepreneurs starting a business and work with regional communication, marketing and development. "They helped me with the business plan and how to fill in the various forms. University studies aren't practical studies, you learn the analytical thinking and the basics of Economics but not how to start up a business in practice". Linnea quit her work at the accounting firm in September 2019 and started up her shop LivsVinn in October 2019. The doors opened on November 1st and the rest, as they say, is history. After working alone for a year, she employed a full-time employee. There is also an extra hand working during the summers. Today, LivsVinn is a thriving business.

But where did the idea of utilizing food waste come from? "The idea started to

grow on me while working on my thesis. Food waste was a very hot topic in social media – and everywhere, really. And then, when you are studying you try to keep your costs down and look for sales. There were newly started online shops selling food with Best before-dates closing in that I used. I started to realize that the Best before-dates don't really matter. My background with working in the greenhouses and a summer job at a pizzeria as well as the offices of a vegetable cooperative and retailer had also made me aware of the enormous amount of perfectly edible products and food that go to waste. There are many greenhouses and vegetable producers in the Närpes region, and hence a lot of second-class vegetables. And I thought that I could do something to solve the problem. Additionally, people tend to want to buy things as cheap

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**POTAT**

as possible. Now, with rising food prices, it is even more noticeable”.

The customers received the shop in a good way, while Linnea thought they would be more skeptical. While talking aloud to themselves in the beginning, assuring themselves that also crooked and thin cucumbers are edible, customers are now fully accustomed to the idea of buying food that might not look first class, but taste good.

Due to logistics, second-class vegetables might actually be the freshest ones around, since the first-class ones take a journey through half of Finland because of the quite strict logistic chains of retailers and big food chains with large central warehouses in the South of Finland. Locally produced tomatoes and cucumbers this way reach the shelves in normal food stores after a round trip of approximately 800 km. The second-class vegetables in the shelves in LivsVinn has a much shorter

way to the store, coming directly from the producers a couple of kilometers away.

Linnea has also other products than the local second-class vegetables. She buys surplus food products that would end up as food waste, from local food stores and from retailers that have imported too much products and cannot sell them. If, for example, a single orange in a bag of oranges is damaged, the whole bag would be discarded from shelves and regarded as unsellable. In LivsVinn, individual fruits or vegetable gone bad are removed from packages and the rest sold in bulk.

Linnea also cooperates closely with local entrepreneurs such as a hotel with a lunch restaurant, a local ice cream factory, an egg producer and an apple juicery. The hotel packages surplus lunch in portions for Linnea to sell in LivsVinn. In autumn, she collects apples from gardens throughout the region and bring them to the juicery, selling the pasteurized juice in 3 liter bag-in-boxes under her own LivsVinn brand. Linnea also dry second-class tomatoes and add oil and garlic for canned dry tomatoes in oil that she sells under the LivsVinn brand. Currently, she is experimenting with drying second-class bell peppers.



What kind of advice does Linnea have to other young entrepreneurs? “You have to dare to take the risk, and do it while you are young and don’t have anything to lose, a lot of expenses and other people to think about. It does take a lot of time in the beginning. You need to keep a cool head and you need to believe in your idea yourself. I couldn’t for example start a gaming company,



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And we find that Linnea thoroughly is a multi-talented entrepreneur, a quick learner that thrives with developing things and solving the challenges that arise. In her private life, she's also finding joy in learning how to renovate, doing a full renovation of an old house she bought for living in. The renovation is coming to an end now, and finally having a functioning kitchen to experiment in is something Linnea looks forward to.

A trainee at LivsVinn earlier created content to a recipe part of the homepage, and Linnea has her mind set at devel-

oping ways of supporting her customers in using what they buy at LivsVinn. Since LivsVinn sometimes get large batches of a certain fruits or vegetables, sharing receipt ideas through social media and linking to her own webpage is a really good way of marketing. Overall, Facebook and Instagram are the main marketing channels of LivsVinn. Since it's hard to predict what kind of batches are coming in and the supply varies from day to day, fast marketing through e.g. Instastories is working out really nicely. The customers learn to keep an eye open and follow the accounts on a daily basis.

We talk a bit about the crucial difference between “best before” and “use by”, or expiry date. “Best before” is typically used for canned, dried, ambient or frozen food and it is a recommendation or rather a quality assurance from the producer that the product is of a certain quality before a certain date. Against common belief, it is



permitted to sell food products after the best before date. “This is the biggest culprit to the food waste”, Linnea says, “We are so used to check the dates, but best before-dates is a fairly new thing. Those over 60 didn’t grow up with best before-dates and they are much better than younger people at understanding that food doesn’t turn inedible after the best before date. You should use your senses to check the food: how does it look, how does it smell, how does it taste. This is common knowledge and an attitude or way of thinking that has disappeared. Nowadays we have a way of buying a lot of food, but throwing away a large part.”

Expiration dates, on the other hand, tell customers the last day a product is safe to consume, and are found on products such as fresh meat. A way of prolonging the life span of these products is putting them in the freezer, before the expiration date.

The shop LivsVinn itself doesn’t have much food waste. Sometimes there are large batches of bread coming in. Linnea says that they put down the prices and, in the end, they might be offering the bread for free. The bread that is eventually removed from the shelves from LivsVinn is ending up as animal food. Locals with e.g. horses, hens or sheep come to pick up the left-over bread.

A part of LivsVinn that Linnea would like to develop is the café. When she started out, the café was more or less a way of filling out the premises she rents for the shop, as there were not as many products as now. Today, the shop is quite full and Linnea looks for opportunities to have some more space for LivsVinn. Every Tuesday and Friday, a group of elderly men gather to have a coffee and talk. “The café culture here in Närpes, and in the coastal area of Ostrobothnia in general, is mostly about

***“The versatility, and to do the decisions yourself and develop your own business idea. The combination of freedom and responsibility – to get to decide your own working hours as far as possible, but still have the responsibility that everything is actually rolling along.”***

elderly men getting together and chatting away. It is socially very important and I've decided to keep the prices in the café down. Everybody should be able to come to the café without having to pay a lot. There are many elderly men that live alone, and the get togethers at the café means a lot to them”, Linnea explains.

We'll soon be leaving LivsVinn and let Linnea get on with her day. In the evening she's giving a talk about her business and sustainability at a theme evening for entrepreneurs arranged by DYNAMO, the regional development company. But before we leave, we ask a final question: What are the top three things about being an entrepreneur? Linnea doesn't need to

think about the answer: “The versatility, and to do the decisions yourself and develop your own business idea. The combination of freedom and responsibility – to get to decide your own working hours as far as possible, but still have the responsibility that everything is actually rolling along.”

**More about LivsVinn:**

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/livsvinn/>

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/livsvinn/>

Webpage:

<https://www.livsvinn.fi/>

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The visit to LivsVinn and the interview of Linnea Strand was conducted as a part of the **HEADLINES** project in Centria University of Applied Sciences, to provide inspiration and a case study of a young entrepreneur in the field of Food.

**HEADLINES** (Higher Education Accelerating Directed Learning in Nurturing Entrepreneurship) is an international activity funded by EIT within the HEI Initiative for the promotion of training in Entrepreneurship based on technological innovation around the areas of Food and Health. The project is a collaboration between Universidad de Burgos (Spain), Centria University of Applied Sciences (Finland), Munster Technological University (Ireland), Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Spain), IMDEA Food Institute (Spain) and Mashauri Limited (United Kingdom).

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