



## Sara Mitchell Poulet Bonne Femme

### GOING FOR GROWTH PROFILE

**NAME:**

Sara Mitchell

**BUSINESS**

Poulet Bonne Femme

**POSITION**

Co-Founder

**WHAT WE DO**

We produce delicious high-quality free-range rotisserie meats, sandwiches and salads.

**CONTACT US**

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[pouletbonnefemme.com](http://pouletbonnefemme.com)

An idea sparked by the flavours tasted when on holiday in Spain led Sara Mitchell and her husband to create not only an award-winning business but one which saved them from being forced to emigrate. What started out as a temporary solution to their money woes flourished into Ireland's first rotisserie chicken business, Poulet Bonne Femme, which now employs 25 staff across its outlets in luxury café chain Avoca.

It was 2008, the same week that Sara and her husband, Gavin McCarthy brought their first baby boy into the world that Gavin was made redundant.

Finding a job to replace his last role as a property developer was difficult and the couple started to look at ways to bring money into the family.

*"Six months on, we began to look at all of our options, one of them was emigration which we didn't want to do. We realised that we'd either have to go away or do something our way,"* says Sara.

The couple drew up a list and one of the options was rotisserie chicken —an idea which they developed after tasting delicious rotisserie chickens straight from the spit on holidays in Spain.

Sara's background was in marketing and neither she nor Gavin had any culinary training or experience in the food industry. Yet they took the plunge and set up Poulet Bonne Femme —named after a French dish Sara's mother served in her childhood home.

Using the last of Gavin's redundancy package, they invested in a custom-made rotisserie trailer which they brought to farmers' markets, including the People's Market in Dun Laoghaire.

The couple opted for free-range chicken despite the cost, but due to an emphasis on buying Irish-only products, choosing free range worked in their favour. The couple invested in a second trailer, and worked seven days a week, marinating their chickens overnight before bringing them to markets and evening events.

By 2011, Sara and Gavin had a strong customer base but realised they needed a permanent location. They sourced a unit in Monkstown but then heard that Avoca had plans to open its own rotisserie there.

*"We thought this is it — it's all over! I rang my Dad and he said phone them and tell them you're the experts'. So, we phoned and they told us to put a proposal together and they loved it!"*

Poulet Bonne Femme rotisserie opened in Avoca Monkstown in 2011, and a year later, it further expanded into Rathcoole, then Suffolk Street, and Kilmacanogue. During this time, Sara and Gavin also expanded their family, welcoming two more baby boys.

Last year, Sara took a step back from the cooking, and moved into an office where she could make more strategic decisions for the business. The company won a Small Firms Association Award in 2010 and, in November 2015, Sara was awarded Entrepreneur of the Year by Image Magazine.

Sara took part in the 8th cycle of Going for Growth in 2016 with Caroline Keeling of Keelings as her mentor. *"It was a such a positive experience and I'd say it was one of the best things I did this year for the business,"* says Sara. *"It gave me a huge confidence in what I was doing and I've found that the business has grown since taking part."*

And the growth continues. In 2015, the company set up its own kitchen in SPADE Enterprise Centre where the team cooks all Poulet Bonne Femme products, which have expanded to include other rotisserie meats, sandwiches and salads. Branded stocks and gravies are in the pipeline and the company has just opened the doors to its first ever franchise in Dundrum Town Centre.

*"I never thought I'd find anything I love so much as what I'm doing. I liked the jobs I had before, but I never loved what I did until now,"* says Sara.

