

FIVE QUESTIONS WITH...

Nicoletta Rocchiccioli – creator and the face of **Marshmallow Blends**, an artisan bath, body, home and fragrance business.



Smells of success!

● To shop now visit the Marshmallow Blends store in Barnsley, or via: marshmallowblends.co.uk

1. Tell us about how your business started...

My business started 14 years ago when I was a busy mum with a young baby at home. I have always had a massive passion for all things skincare related and a love of bath products, but I struggled to find products back then that were great for skin but still had an element of fun. Soon, I was mixing ingredients in my kitchen every night.



2. What makes your business unique and stand out?

We use amazing natural skin friendly ingredients and the highest quality fragrances. I'm a bit of a fragrance snob, so they have to be perfect for them to pass the nose test. The second reason is because all our products have a fun twist. I always say bath time doesn't have to be boring.

3. How do you decide on scents and have you made one that hasn't made the cut?

There are a few scents I dislike but they sell like hot cakes, so I like to think we have something to suit all tastes. I have probably wasted thousands of pounds on testing various oils and lots don't make the cut, but it's worth it to get those amazing gold nuggets when we find one that we all adore.

4. If you had to recommend just one product, what would it be and why?

It would be our Adore Lenor Wax Melts. It is our bestselling product and has been for the last 10 consecutive years. It smells absolutely incredible and gives off the most long-lasting fresh laundry scent.

5. Tell us about a project or item you are releasing in the future

We are soon launching our Christmas Gingerbread Special Wax Slabs that have an amazing aroma and make perfect stocking fillers. We also have eco-friendly conditioner and shampoo bars, available in lots of stunning scents.



Too cool for school

UNIQUE REAL LIFE

Charlie Hayes, 23, from Folkestone, didn't forsake her wacky wardrobe when she became a mum. But not everyone was a fan...

Perusing through the charity shop racks, I searched for my next wardrobe staple. Ever since I was young, I relished collecting one-of-a-kind fashion statement pieces.

Looking different and sticking to my own tastes rather than going with the crowd was my style.

Gobsmacked, I would be glued to YouTube watching music videos of Lady Gaga and Katy Perry.

But it wasn't the music that entranced me – it was their eccentric outfits.

From Katy Perry's iconic ice cream cone bralette to her full Hello Kitty tour get-up and of course, Lady Gaga's controversial meat dress, I was absolutely obsessed.

I want to look like that! I thought, gazing at their outfits. And so I naturally fell into my own style.

At just 11 years old, I dressed like a stereotypical skater kid – preferring baggy jeans to the popular skinny style and grunge influences.

'Oi, you're an emo!' kids at school would yell at me.

Throwing food at me from their school dinners, I didn't let it grind me down – instead, I fought back.

'Come on then!' I'd yell, fists raised.

It's safe to say I got into quite a few fights then – but my parents never deterred me.

Coming from a creative family, my mum was always doing DIY projects – from woodwork to sprucing

up our home interiors with her homemade glassware, she had a flare for the eccentric.

So for me, my unique style was something to be proud of.

Even when I fell pregnant at 17, I wasn't going to compromise on my style.

Shopping for maternity clothes online, I couldn't help but grimace – baggy, unflattering and in the most dull colours, too, they couldn't be more opposite than my love for grunge.

So instead, despite being eight months pregnant, I donned my regular get-up of fishnets and a tartan patterned mini skirt.

'As long as you're comfortable!' my friends would say – they loved that I wouldn't change, even though my body was changing.

It stayed that way right up until my baby boy Jasper was born on 5 February 2018, weighing 9lb 2oz.

And beyond, too.

I knew that I'd be teaching Jasper as he grew up that it's cool to be different.

At one years old, Jasper started going to nursery and



We were harassed on the school run



WE LOVE BEING DIFFERENT

slowly, I started becoming more exposed to other parents.

Wow, I thought, noticing their cardigans and jeans.

Instantly, I realised that I looked out of the ordinary.

Especially in my short skirts, boots, fishnets, loud colours and statement accessories.

But none of the parents batted an eyelid – I even won over their children, too!

'You look like a princess!' one little girl told me.

My T-shirt, emblazoned with a teddy bear print, was a huge winner among the girls.

Even the nursery staff praised my style.

'We can't wait to see what you wear every day,' they said.

In fact, I've only had one bad experience in-person of being criticised for my style.

Walking Jasper to school, the same route every morning, I noticed the same car every day slowing down to follow us.

Grabbing Jasper's hand, I stared inside the window, noticing a man driving and a woman in the passenger seat.

Winding down the window, the woman glared at me and pulled a disgusted face.

'You're absolutely vile!' she

spat at me.

What the hell? I thought.

After all, I was dressed up in pretty pinks as a cupcake for Valentine's Day this year – this was probably one of my least skimpy and more adorable fits!

While the woman cackled, I decided to seize my chance.

I wasn't going to let Jasper think it's OK for people to talk like that to others.

Striding up to the car, I tried to contain my seething rage.

'Get out of the car then!' I said, confronting her.

Fear flashed through her eyes.

Then, the light turned green and she sped off.

That'll teach her! I thought. But the online world was a much harsher critic.

Setting up a TikTok account in 2019, I started posting my unique style.

Sporting bright pink platform shoes, wearing the England flag as a mini skirt and showing off my makeup in all shades of the rainbow, I thought my fashion would be an instant hit.

But instead, I immediately divided opinion.

You look like a clown! one comment read, insulting my

I wear fishnets to take Jasper to nursery



Jasper takes after me with his style

little boy – I'm proud to teach him that being different is cool.

So I'll continue dressing as weird as I want to – let's give the school run mummies something to stare at!

● Follow @strawberry.hayes on TikTok

bright and bold eyeshadow.

Think of the children. This is so inappropriate! read another.

Although at first, the comments stung, I didn't let them grind me down.

To the ones claiming I was embarrassing Jasper, I replied with a video of us.

He's completely unphased by my flair for funky fashion.

To him, it's just the norm – and I think I've even set him a good example to follow.

Growing out his long blond hair, Jasper relishes being different, too.

'I've got the best hair in the world, Mum,' he told me.

Sadly, just like I was, it has meant he's been the victim of some bullying, but he's so resilient and I'm proud of him for being himself.

With Jasper, now five, having his own style – from Marvel graphic tees to his Stella McCartney shorts with chips on them – we're Folkestone's most stylish duo.

And I know that just because I dress against the grain, I'm not a bad mum to my

I'm the best-dressed mum!



WORDS BY KATIE PEARSON AND FLOSIE PALMER. IMAGES: SWNS