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supervisor in a 5-star London hotel in 1994, but found that most of her co-workers seemed to "resent their jobs and the people they were employed to serve".

"I did not want to work in that environment and decided to create my own business putting people first," says Lena, who started her company in a pitifully small kitchen in a rented house in Bow, perfecting a small range of simple dishes with a Swedish twist.

"I was on the phone constantly to my mum asking how to prepare this and how much salt goes in that," she adds. "Small orders were coming in but my greatest challenge was getting the food to the events. I had no transport so I had to deliver all my food by Tube.

"I approached numerous banks for a loan but they all turned me down flat," says Lena. "I heard about the Prince's Trust and at first they turned me down as well. But I refused to take no for an answer.

"Eventually, I was granted an interview. I knew this was my only chance so I baked a very special Swedish Deli cake, put it in a box and shook it until the cake was smashed into tiny pieces. I told the panel that this was what happened to food if you had to transport it on the London Underground. It worked, they lent me £2,500 for a van and my business was transformed."

One decade on and Lena now has a turnover of £2m, premises exceeding 7,000 sq ft and a staff of 18.

