

Excerpts from **Food Jobs** by Irena Chalmers

Food Lover

Recipe for Success: Soup Peddler

By David J. Ansel, the Soup Peddler

A scant three years and four months ago, an idea occurred to me whilst sitting on a porch swing at a magical house in South Austin, Texas. What if I could make a living cooking food and taking it to people's homes? At my wits end with trying to figure out anything I could do for a living instead of being a mediocre computer programmer, I figured it was worth a try. Though I had no culinary training, I had dabbled with cooking dinners for large groups and had started spending a little time at the restaurant supply store. There I espied some little white buckets that would be perfect for taking food to folks' houses. But what would fit best in those buckets? What is the most form-fitting food in the history of the universe? What was the only thing I knew how to cook halfway decently? Soup!

Once I had the menu taken care of, I had to set my thoughts towards the delivery mechanism. Well, I figured would probably have to spend a lot of time in a car, which I don't much like. I much prefer to bike. I decided to deliver soup by bicycle around my neighborhood.

Rare Job: Chewing Gum Chewer

Cadbury's employs a professional chewer to report on the taste of its gum. It is not known if this is a full-time position nor whether it is required for the chewing to take place on the premises only.

I needed a name for the business. I retreated to the porch swing, where I get most of my best thinking done. Soup Subscription Service for Savory Soul Sustenance? Probably not. The Soup Man. Eh. Need something cute. How about Soup Peddler? Soup Peddeler? Which spelling to use? I'll use Peddler, just in case this thing gets too big for bicycles.

I sent out an e-mail to my friends and neighbors describing the service. Sunday afternoon, I'll bring you a bucket of soup on my bike. Seventeen generous customers took me up on the offer. I went out and bought an eighty-dollar pot and made gumbo in my own kitchen (not entirely legal but I had to start somewhere). Three short years later, my staff of soup makers, peddlers, and I cook and distributed ten thousand gallons of dozens of different varieties of soup to the porches of Austinites over the course of an eight-month soup season. We work out of a commercial kitchen. I have been featured in such disparate media as The Christian Science Monitor and Punk Planet. I have become the Ferris Bueller of Austin, liked and respected by hipsters, soccer moms, and tattooed punks equally. I have been referred to as an "American folk hero."

How did this happen? The task of describing the breadth and depth of the entrepreneurial effort is nearly impossible. Boot camp for the Army? Nothing. Swimming the English Channel? Yawn. Raising a child? Yeah, sorta. Spending an eternity pushing a boulder up a hill? You're starting to get there. Of course, most of those comparison cases have their rewards, and entrepreneurship does too. Most of them change you on such a deep level that you never look at the world or the people around you the same way again. The same goes for starting your own business. It takes every ounce of your soul, and the risk is that you'll be left a desiccated shell of a human being with nothing to show for your efforts. The potential reward is huge, though, not the least of which is having your destiny under your own control as much as is humanly possible.