

THE INNOVATION JOURNEY

Riitta Rontu is the founder of the Syötteen sieni ja yrtti LP (Syöte mushroom and herb) that offers various mushroom products and experiences, based on hand-picked wild mushrooms. Riitta currently lives permanently in Syöte, Pudasjärvi, where she used to spend all of her summers and holidays since childhood, as her family has long roots there. She has always been enthusiastic about mushroom picking, which offers the joy of discovery and of being in nature. Syöte national park provides exceptionally rich grounds for mushrooms: one can find over a 100 different mushroom species in its old forests. Riitta had felt tired of her old job and was studying entrepreneurship alongside work. She ended up establishing her business in 2016 as part of the studies. In 2017, planned layoffs at her work provided the final push to leave, and Riitta was ready to do something new with her life. She decided to try and turn her hobby and passion into a living.



Already before establishing her business, Riitta had been selling some of the mushrooms she had picked. First, she operated in her kitchen, but soon realized she needed a bigger space and better equipment for her operations, which she acquired in 2019. Unreliable mushroom

years lead her to develop other mushroom based products and services based on customer feedback. Currently Riitta offers various mushroom products (such as dried mushrooms and mushroom salt), as well as herb, berry and garlic products, mushroom experiences, and events (such as mushroom picking excursions and company getaways), and mushroom related courses.

THE INNOVATION IMPACT



Riitta has developed new kinds of local food products and services from wild mushrooms. The small business has done its part to invigorate local life. She cooperates with other local tourism businesses and retailers and is one of the few who offer local food products to tourists. Through her endeavours, Riitta is spreading the knowledge of mushroom picking and preparation and helping people to utilize wild food. Riitta has a network of elderly women who have an opportunity to earn extra income by picking mushrooms and berries for her. Some of the old fields at the family farm managed by her brother were restored and now used for growing garlic.

USEFUL LINKS

<https://www.syotteensieni.com/>
https://www.facebook.com/syotteensienijayrtti/?r ef=embed_page
<https://www.instagram.com/syotteensieni/>