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### Network Benefits - Tejas - a taste of manufacturing success

Carmen del Solar Almenara manages Tejas del Solar, a privately-owned business that manufactures and sells specialised hand-made chocolates called Tejas.

And Carmen is one of the true success stories of the Women in Manufacturing Network which is convened by the NSW Department of State and Regional Development.



Carmen has been involved with the Women in Manufacturing Network since day one and participated in many of its activities and events, including breakfast seminars, mini-expos, speed networking functions. “I find the Women in Manufacturing Network very inspiring,” Carmen said. “It is an organisation that gives us, the members, an invaluable opportunity to share experiences, information and advice. “This comes about in a friendly, welcoming and supportive environment that the network manages to create. “I am happy to be a part of such a productive group,” Carmen said.

Carmen, who was born in Peru and now lives in Sydney, began her professional career in tourism specialising in conferences and incentives, but she now enjoys her role in the magical world of chocolates - the amazing result of a series of events, challenges and experiences.

She manufactures and sells an exclusive variety of innovative hand-made chocolates known as Tejas. This new venture has given her the opportunity to bring together her combined Australian and Peruvian heritage. The business was developed from a hobby and an idea to tell cultural stories through sweet treats and ended up creating an innovative product and introducing a new taste with chocolates.

Tejas del Solar is committed to the integrity of the product at every stage of its business growth. With a selection of 12 unusual flavours, the products are called Tejas (pronounced teh-has) which are inspired from colonial days when hand-crafted sweets were a delicacy.

Tejas are a delicious combination of Australian fruit and nuts and Peruvian manjarblanco (a sweet mix of milk, vanilla beans and sugar simmered for a few hours until it reaches its rich texture) coated in luscious Belgian chocolate. Tejas is a product that stands on its own with unusual, surprising and delicious flavours. “They are prepared by hand in small batches to better control the quality of the product, which makes each piece unique,” she said. Carmen began the business in July, 2006.

“Initially four varieties of Tejas in the traditional large size were prepared in the family kitchen and were sold directly to the public at farmers’ markets. “With a high reliance on word-of-mouth, orders started increasing and a commercial kitchen was set up. The flavours have expanded to 12 and Tejas are offered in two sizes,” she said.

Today, Carmen’s business is expanding nationally and enjoying an increase in sales. Her Tejas are sold directly via her website [www.tejasdelsolar.com.au](http://www.tejasdelsolar.com.au) and are available for wholesale to specialised chocolate shops, gourmet outlets, restaurants and caterers.