

Red

the best things in life

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STEAL THEIR STYLE

Yasmin Le Bon

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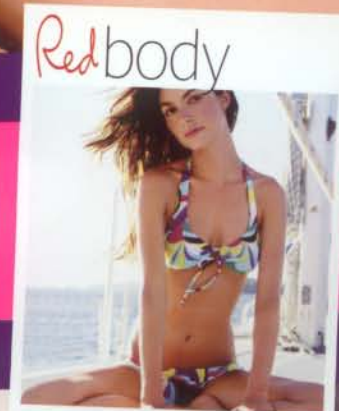
EASY ENTERTAINING
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FASHION * HOMES * TRAVEL * SHOPPING * BEAUTY

Out of office experience

Red meets five women who are far from desk-bound in their inspirational workplaces

Words Stephanie Clarkson Photographs Andrew Montgomery

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

SAM PETTER, 41, is founder and director of Tatty Bumpkin, an organic clothing company for children, and an organic cobnut farmer. She lives and works on her farm in Kent with husband Chris, 41, and son Oscar, four.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO WORK ON A COBNUT FARM?

I wouldn't say I chose it. The women of our family have owned the farm and harvested cobnuts (a cultivated hazelnut) since the turn of the century. I consider myself fortunate to be in a position to work here; I'd be letting my ancestors down if I didn't. There are only 50 commercial growers left in the UK and, among those, we are the only certified organic one.

WHAT'S YOUR WORKING ENVIRONMENT LIKE?

We have orchards full of trees, which are over 100 years old, and we keep sheep, chickens and horses. The farm itself is stuck in a timewarp. The main house only got electricity eight years ago and all the outbuildings are tumbledown except the barn, which my brothers and I have restored into an office, from which to run our other interests.

HOW DO YOUR SURROUNDINGS INSPIRE YOU?

In the city, I felt my ingenuity and vision was sometimes crushed by the noise and hubbub. In the country, my creativity has space to flourish and breathe; I have a constant stream of new ideas flowing around my head.

WHERE'S YOUR FAVOURITE SPOT TO WORK?

I adore working in the open air. I used to sit beneath the trees, but now I use the old chicken coop in the orchard as

a place to brainstorm. I've got some cushions in there; it's very peaceful.

HOW DO YOU COPE WITH THE BRITISH WEATHER?

In the country, you're more aware of weather changes. We are truly at the mercy of the elements: if it's too wet, the cobnuts don't pollinate, which can be pretty catastrophic for our harvest.

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR LUNCH?

We don't have the luxury of popping out to Pret for a sandwich, because the

nearest shop is a mile and a half away. Instead, we make salads with produce from our garden; I pickle my own beetroot and even grow sprouts.

ARE THERE ANY STRESSES TO THE JOB?

Although I have a man who helps me prune the trees and my mother helps take care of the farm day-to-day, we still have to find people to help us harvest the cobnuts, as it's hard work and is all done by hand. I also have to market the farm effectively, as we're producing a niche food. My greatest success was probably getting Rick Stein to name us as one of his 'Food Heroes'. There's



also the fact that our home is next to the office, so it's difficult to switch off from work at the end of the day.

AND THE PERKS?

I feel in control. I used to live in a city, where I worked under

someone who was completely ineffectual. I hated the powerlessness. Occasionally, I do miss the bustle and anonymity of the city; here, everyone knows you and our idea of excitement is entering the village marmalade competition. But, somehow, I feel more alive for not being part of the rat race any more. ■

Visit cobnuts.co.uk, tattybumpkin.com

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the noise and hubbub'*

