

## From Chai wallahs to fine dining restaurants, Rhea Singhal's Ecoware plans to bring about a green revolution

Tanvi Dubey | August 06, 2015 at 8:30 am

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Healthy food habits, lifestyles and health are a topic of vigorous discussions both online and offline. While we debate upon good and bad eating habits and diets, Rhea Singhal says,

“What we often forget is the packaging. For me, all benefits of a healthy meal can easily be negated if the serving dish has not been cleaned properly, is re-used, or contains chemical additives that are harmful to human consumption.

Rhea is the Founder and CEO of [Ecoware Solutions](#), which she started in 2009 at the age of 27.

Talking about what got her to startup she shares that it was the need to reduce the burden of plastics, and provide safe and healthy food packaging like bio-degradable disposable products. After much R&D they produced a product that is durable and caters to the various cuisines.

### A viable solution

Ecoware started production in 2010 and has an online and offline presence. Today with two production units, 100 employees and an annual turnover of 10 crores, it has footfalls in India, U.A.E., Australia and [Canada](#) as well.



The products are created from plant biomass and yield strong, water resistant and aesthetic tableware that give people the chance to eat safely and live responsibly according to Rhea.

The plant biomass pulp is produced from plant residue and is refined through natural processes so it is safe and is also 100% biodegradable and compostable according to Rhea. What further lends credibility to the product is the certification from USDA (United States Department of Agriculture).

### **Challenges**

“We know that the safest path is to avoid plastic when good alternatives are available,” she says.

Given that this is a niche market, one of Rhea’s biggest challenges, was creating awareness about environment friendly products. This includes educating young students and enlightening distributors in order to incentivize them to look at the product over traditionally accepted plastic. Some of the ways Ecoware has worked on spreading education and awareness about eco friendly products has been through working with schools and with cancer support groups to create awareness around the risks of using plastic and Styrofoam.

A large test of business stamina according to her is being taken seriously by the male dominated business industry – from the laborers in the factory to the distributors, and purchase managers. Another challenge is convincing VCs that Ecoware is the future.

### **Dubai-London-Delhi**

Born in Mumbai, Rhea’s parents moved to Dubai when she was a year old in 1983. She grew up in Dubai and London. Being at the boarding school in UK taught her discipline and gave her a strong sense of independence that, she says, “I have held very strongly all my life. It taught me to be comfortable with who I am and not be scared to fight for what I stood for.”

She did her Pharmacology (Hons) from the

University of Bristol and after graduation



joined Pfizer Inc. in London as a senior marketing and sales executive. “Five years at Pfizer taught me to be business focused and I definitely learnt more on the job than any text book could have taught me. It shaped me, made me more focused and driven, taught me that the only thing constant was change, and the best thing I could do is focus on what I could control and just get on with what I had to do.”

In 2009 she left Pfizer and moved to Delhi with her husband.

“ After arriving in Delhi, I noticed how people were talking about health and safety of food but ignoring the packaging from which they were eating that very same food,

she shares. Rhea wanted to start a venture and knew that she had the skills but was waiting for the right opportunity to get started. Things fell into place when she realized there was something she could do in the eco-friendly ware sector.

### **Life partner to co-founder**

Rhea had started on her own but over the years both her family and company have grown. Her husband too quit his job and joined [Ecoware](#) and is now the [COO](#) of the company.

Rhea oversees new business development, sales, marketing and all brand related activities. About working with her husband, she says, “We’re both in the loop concerning what’s going on in each other’s departments, but we don’t step in and manage each other’s teams unless the other person is out of town or otherwise unavailable. We share a strong work ethic and are focused on the same finish line. We make it a point to talk about work only during office hours and try not to bring work home so the kids have our undivided attention when we’re at home with them.”

### **Business mantra**

Rhea's business mantra is about thinking of the bigger picture, being open to change, the ability to adapt across cultures and most importantly look at solutions.

She is looking forward to becoming the one stop shop for all biodegradable disposable packaging and ensuring that her product is used across sectors, from fine dine restaurants to even road side *chai wallahs*.

“ My vision is to make Ecoware a household brand synonymous with safe food packaging, similar to what Dettol means to hygiene or Google means to online search.

Not just an [entrepreneur](#) but also as a mother of two young kids, Rhea is driven to spread the message of responsible living and carry on providing solutions that are “Healthy and safe for the environment, our families, and generations to come.”

With the current frenzy being witnessed in the growth of [food tech startups](#), Rhea's product seems to be the solution for a more sustainable and environment friendly ware.

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### Tanvi Dubey


Always cheerful, Tanvi is a history buff. She spouts Bhojpuri and English with the same ease. She loves books. Eating and cooking both make her happy! She believes that women rule the world. She is fearless and does not shy away from speaking her mind. However, she does not suffer fools gladly. Love she believes is the solution to all the problems in the world.


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 **Romana Zaman**  
hats off to rhea and the wonderful product. many many congratulations  
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 **Nimit Jain** ·  
Designer at Cards That Speak  
What a coincidence! I wrote to her just yesterday to get Ecoware in Chennai 😊  
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 **Parvesh Chawla** ·  
President at ITD HOMES Welfare Society  
There is lot of scope in eco friendly crockery and disposable crockery which would be alternative to plastic and other harmful materials. But pricing should also be competitive. If you have the ecofriendly and economic products and if you are looking for funding we can provide small funding.  
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 **Rhea Singhal**  
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