

Mireille Kaptein's Acceptance Speech

Seize your Opportunity

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, members of the jury, Business women of the Year, my family, colleagues and everyone gathered here today.

First of all following attack in Utrecht I would like to express my sympathies to the victims and their families. These sad circumstances will mark this day in March and move us greatly.

My firm belief in life is that you need to seize the opportunities you get. Take your chances. Whether you are a woman or a man, young or old, at the start of your career or at a later stage. Seize those opportunities: that's how I stand in life. That is also the reason why, some ten years ago, I stepped forward to take over the management of our company Kaptein. My starting point was what was best for the company. This was my chance to contribute even more to the growth of, and innovation at Kaptein.

Today I stand before you as Business woman of the Year 2019. I see the Veuve Clicquot Prize as an enormous honour, and at the same time it is now my responsibility in the role of ambassador to represent this award and spread my message - seize your opportunities.

Firstly I would like to thank Veuve Clicquot for the organisation behind the Veuve Clicquot Prize and for keeping it alive and well.

C'est avec plaisir et un grand honneur que j'accepte le Prix Veuve Clicquot qui je l'espère consolidera nos relations de l'année à venir.

I thank Minister Cora van Nieuwenhuizen for awarding the prize. Thanks to Hans de Boer and the other members of the jury for the trust placed in me, to Bob Bron of Veuve Clicquot for organising this event, and a special thanks to Business woman of the Year 2018 Aukje Kuypers.

Aukje, I know that the entire room agrees with me that you have done a fantastic job as a Business woman of the Year this past year.

Two weeks ago Annemarie Jorritsma surprised me with the news of the jury's decision. I was surprised, dazed, but in particular I was honoured.

When Nicole-Barbe Clicquot-Ponsardin took over management of the champagne house after the death of her husband in 1804, it was extraordinary at the time. A woman at the helm in a man's world! This widow turned out to be an extremely successful businesswoman.

What was NOT self-evident more than two centuries ago is still NOT in 2019. A woman at the head of a company is still exceptional. Yet I notice, day in day out, that it does work.

That as a team, regardless of background or gender, man or woman, you can pursue one common goal: in our case the common interest of our company Kaptein.

In particular, as I stand here, I am so PROUD! Proud of our 180 fantastic colleagues, our products, and of the fact that almost all Dutch people - without perhaps knowing it themselves - have eaten Kaptein's cheese or spread Echte Boter on their bread.

I am so proud that we export our dairy products to more than 55 countries around the world, that we process more than 20 million kilos of cheese and butter every year and that we maintain lasting relationships with our customers and suppliers.

I am also proud of our Echte Boter - who doesn't recognise it? With the red, white and blue logo; with the cows, because those are our true purveyors to the royal household; and the gold-coloured packaging. You can find it in company restaurants, airplanes, hospitals and even in every Dutch refrigerator.

I'm also proud that, for the last two years, we have a wonderful new headquarters and production site in Heiloo, with room to expand, where we can feel closely connected to the ups and downs of this region.

To all of you,

I am a child of my parents and grew up with our company. I was asked in the run-up to today, "What is your secret?"

In answer:

I am flexible, down to earth, open; I like to change gears quickly; I support our company and the family businesses of the Netherlands; long term always comes first for me; investing in growth comes before quick returns. I look ahead.

Yes,

Kaptein has grown considerably in recent years, and with new production lines we have become more efficient. We have also put more own-brands on the market, such as Old Alkmaar, which I happened to see in Japan last week. We have ambitions to continue to grow, to innovate further and to produce and package more sustainably, not only because the market demands it, but also because we fully believe that things can be done differently, better, more sustainably, but within the rules that apply in the field of food safety and hygiene.

Kaptein is, even though you wouldn't think it today, modest. How beautiful it is to travel the world with butter and cheese, and to conquer the world with these typically Dutch dairy products.

100% honest.

100% Dutch.

100% Kaptein.

I can hardly believe it: Business woman of the Year 2019. Without the trust of my father, my mother and my sister Heidi I would not be standing here now. My parents gave me the extra push to take over the helm from them. At that time we looked deep into each other's eyes, as you often do within the family. Does it stop here or does Kaptein continue? Just as my father once received support from his father, who started the company in 1936.

I want to thank my family for the unconditional trust they have placed in me.

Of course I also dedicate this prize to all my colleagues at Kaptein. We do this together!

Of course also the home front. To my husband Anne, who is indispensable as Commercial Director, and to my two sons Mick and Sem. Because believe me, business woman or not, at home it all goes on as usual. A business woman is just a mother with all the everyday worries.

Finally,

I am - already - incredibly proud of the title Business woman of the Year 2019.

I see this prize as an encouragement for all enterprising, enthusiastic women in the Netherlands. My advice for all of them: don't be held back by any ceiling, whether it be glass or concrete, but stand for your ambitions and your company.

Be like widow Ponsardin two centuries ago. Trust the people around you, convince others of your abilities and fulfil your mission with the primal strength that is within you.

I see this title as a reward for the entrepreneurship of a Dutch family business. I had the opportunity to spread my wings and I grasped that golden opportunity with both hands.

I'm going to make it a very good year.

Thank you for your time.