

**Taking on the male-dominated rose industry, the owner of Roses Forever ApS, Rosa Eskelund, calls herself “a little bit crazy” but has definitely found the path to success using Scandinavian perseverance, Sicilian charms and a keen eye for selecting roses with high potential. FCI sat down with today’s most dynamic rose breeder to hear her thoughts about the next big thing in rose breeding.**

## Everything’s coming up roses for Rosa Eskelund

Supplying over half of the jobs in Europe and the Americas alone, family businesses represent a vital part of many economies around the world. Building a successful, and sustainable, family business in rose breeding are husband and wife team Harley and Rosa Eskelund who founded their production company Rosa ApS in 1988 in Sabro, near Aarhus, Denmark. Eight years later, they set up their breeding company Roses Forever ApS, also in Denmark. When the times come the Eskelunds will hand Roses Forever to their son and second generation, Anders. While he is a natural in the business, he is currently learning about the industry to help himself, and his future company, reach full potential. “He is 26 years old, loves to travel and has specialised in greenhouse production and marketing,” Rosa Eskelund said. “He has to define his own standards and as such he is currently employed by a rose grower in Japan learning the ropes of survival on his own.”

### Nowhere near done

Please, please, don’t get Rosa wrong - she is still far away from retiring. But after a year of high license sales,



New: Rosa’s line of romantic, bourbon-shaped and slightly scented cut roses which will be sold under the Rosa Loves Me® brand.

awards, and extensive business travels and trade show participation, a long-term perspective with a focus on breeding is needed to ensure that Roses Forever®’s roses continue to live up to customer expectations. “We promise we’ll always put our customer’s business one step ahead, because their success is our most important reward. As such, top priority should be given to extending our Roses Forever and Infinity® lines of miniature roses as, among growers, there is a constant demand for new products,” Rosa said. At this year’s IPM ESSEN show in Germany, a new yellow Infinity rose will make its debut. “Yellow is important in all colour mixes. But there is much more in the pipeline. My efforts will be geared toward creating a good red and orange variety which will make the Infinity family complete. Out in the fields in Denmark and the Netherlands

are over 800 unnamed test roses, impatiently waiting to be further selected,” Rosa said.

### Show ponies and working horses

Rosa breeds at her home in Faaborg where she finds inspiration in her surroundings, from the Danish horizon to the waves and vastness of the Kattegat Sea. “I am a dreamer,” she said. “Roses simply stun me. Roses are superior to any other flower. All of them are simply beautiful.”

That said, she is quick to avoid any further purple prose. Show ponies should also be good work horses. Rosa was clear about her high expectations when it comes to roses: “A successful rose combines beauty, disease resistance, productivity and excellent shelf life. Luckily I can rely on my 33 years of experience in growing cuttings



Rosa Eskelund: “Roses simply stun me.”



Field tests.

into readily saleable plants while creating novel roses. My breeding focuses on beautiful, hassle-free flowers for commercial greenhouse growers and end consumers alike. The ultimate mini rose is extremely uniform, boldly coloured and only sheds its petals after a very long time. It has an excellent shelf life and perfectly fits high-density greenhouse production with quick turnarounds. The criteria for a good garden rose is much more about top quality, plant health, and clever marketing by using logos, tags and printed pots. It is equally important to create a buzz and become a part of rose societies communities around the world by sharing ideas, reactions and experiences.” Speaking of marketing, Rosa added, “This summer we launched our Plant’n’Relax® I Am Grateful garden rose, which was awarded the Gold Medal at the renowned Baden-Baden Rose Trials in Germany. For us it meant a lot, as our roses have been extensively put to the test during two years of assessments by rose experts from around the world.”

Roses Forever  
Pink Moscow



The coveted accolade has fueled demand among garden rose growers. “As their one-and-a-half year crop time is relatively extensive, they attach great importance to growing only reliable varieties.” Today, Roses Forever is truly an award-winning business with many of the most sought after accolades earned at international rose trials and trade exhibitions such as the 2014 Roeulx Rose Trials in Belgium, the 2014 nursery stock trade show Plantarium and the 2013 Flormart (Italy) and IPM ESSEN (Germany) horticultural trade shows.

### Rosa Loves Me

The real breaking breeding news is Rosa’s newly-launched line of romantic, bourbon-shaped and slightly scented cut roses which will be sold under the Rosa Loves Me® brand.

“Production has already kicked off in the prominent cut rose producing countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Colombia and Ecuador,” she said.

Rosa has a strong belief in this new line of cut roses. “I am not much of a fan of using too much garden rose blood which causes these roses to shed their petals quickly. Rosa Love Me roses, however, keep their petals firmly for a long time. They are as strong as mini roses and are slightly scented as extra benefit.”

### Passion

Rosa, who at 17 took her early education and Beder, a noted college for horticulture, said that

there was never any doubt that she would pursue her passion in horticulture. “An apprenticeship at three different pot plant companies was part of my study. I got to work with different crops and during class hours I specialised in greenhouse production techniques. I developed a keen interest when I took biology and the teacher inspired me when lecturing on genetics,” she said, adding that Roses Forever loves to share their knowledge of rose growing with customers. “We breed more than just plants. We give growers advice in keeping a pot rose greenhouse up and running; crop support is given by our consultant who travels worldwide. Greenhouse trainings in our production greenhouses in Denmark is also possible.”

### World Rose Convention

Asked about future plans and goals, Rosa concluded that the outlook is very, very rosy. She said new markets are emerging such as South America, Chile and Argentina, and there are plenty of opportunities to produce and sell mini roses locally. Rosa added that Asia is still growing at a rapid pace with big demand from Chinese growers.

“We are passing through all stages of development. Over the past few years we have invested a lot in building our brand. Now it is time to concentrate more at the core of our business: rose breeding. Meanwhile anticipation is building as the World Federation of Rose Societies is preparing for the 18<sup>th</sup> World Rose Convention, which will be held in Copenhagen June 28 - July 4, 2018. Here a member of the Danish royal family will follow a tradition of naming a new rose... a new rose bred by Roses Forever of course,” Rosa said.

She stressed that a world convention is the perfect platform for an international business such as Roses Forever. “We sell grower licenses in Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Italy, France, Mexico, Spain, Canada, Korea, Australia, China, India, Germany, Sweden, the UK, Finland and Poland and South Africa. Pretty amazing isn’t it?” III