

ITALIAN AD MAN
TO MOZZARELLA
MADMAN.
SAY HELLO TO
THAT'S AMORE'S...

GIORGIO LINGUANTI



SEVEN YEARS AGO, GIORGIO LINGUANTI MADE THE LEAP FROM ADVERTISING TO CHEESEMAKING AND NEVER LOOKED BACK. LUCKY US.

Melbourne's outer northern suburbs are about as far from Sicily as you can get. But as Giorgio walks through That's Amore's Donnybrook factory, weaving his way around steaming vats of mozzarella, checking this and adjusting that, he looks right at home.

Giorgio came to Melbourne looking for a fresh start. He left behind a career in advertising, his family, the world he knew and loved. The decision to come to Australia surprised even him, but he knew straight away it was the right one.

"When I arrived, everyone was so nice to me and so interested in what I was doing. Australians are genuinely friendly, and not because they want something from you, it's just their way. I loved that," Giorgio said.

"I also love that people here are open to new ideas and that the system supports people who want to do good things. I come from a place where you do well only if you're shifty or sly. Here it's easy for good people to do good things."

Giorgio didn't speak any English when he arrived in Australia, so a job in advertising was out of the question. For a while he worked in a fruit shop, but then he landed a job at a cheese factory and caught 'milk fever'.

He learned on his feet, and after washing a lot of cheese vats and stretching a lot of curd, That's Amore Cheese was born. It was a hectic time. Giorgio would make cheese on Sunday, drive around restaurants and shops to give out product samples on weekday mornings, and work afternoon shifts at a cardboard factory to pay the bills.

"I started with one product, the bocconcini leaf. Then we started making a gourmet ricotta, smooth, creamy and very delicate. We also made smoked cheeses like scamorza and diavoletti, as well as burrata and buffalo mozzarella."

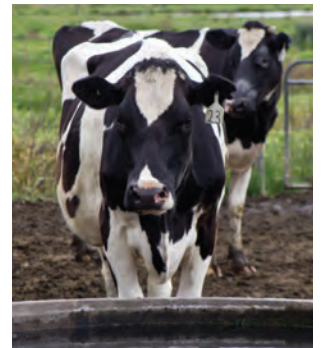
The company grew very quickly, and soon it was time to find a more permanent and larger home. By coincidence, Donnybrook Cheese, in Melbourne's northern suburbs, was looking to shift attention from cheesemaking to dairy farming and running a restaurant.

Sample Giorgio's cheese at Melbourne's La Latteria, 104 Elgin Street, Carlton.





CHEESEMAKING IS AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MILK



In March 2010, That's Amore took over Donnybrook's cheese factory. It was the perfect solution at just the right time. Giorgio was grateful, but not surprised.

"This always happens to me," he laughed. "Whenever I need something, I find a solution because God helps me find one."

Donnybrook's 70-odd cows now work for Giorgio, together with a herd in Gippsland, two herds of buffalo in northern Victoria and Queensland, and now goats.

The menagerie produces 20,000 litres of milk each week. Giorgio and nine other cheesemakers stretch each batch by hand. It's a lot of work, but Giorgio is the first to admit it's a labour of love bordering on obsession.

"Once I started making cheese, I couldn't stop," Giorgio said. "If it's a long weekend, or I'm away from the factory for a few days, I miss the contact with the milk. I'm addicted, definitely."

"Cheesemaking is an intimate relationship with the milk. You've got to feel the milk, feel the cheese. People have a different 'touch' for things. Some people can be good bakers or chefs. I could never be a chef, it's not my world. Cheese is my world now.

"I believe there's still a lot of magic involved in cheesemaking. Sometimes you follow a recipe, and it just doesn't work. So you start thinking, maybe it's this, maybe it's that. If you ask an expert, no one will tell you – it's this. They'll say, maybe it's this, or maybe that. No one really knows for sure. On some questions, they come back to you and say, we don't know, no one knows.

"A cheesemaker has to feel the cheese, taste it. That's how you know. Sometimes you make a great cheese, and try to do it again, and it just doesn't come," he laughed.

"For me, the key to cheesemaking is love. That's true for everything you do, not just cheese. If you do it with love, the

results are obvious – it's got to be good. It's the experience for many millions of people, I'm sure. That's why the company's name, 'That's Amore', means 'That's Love.'

"When I'm at events sometimes, chefs come up to me and tell me how much they appreciate my cheeses and how fantastic they are. Who needs more than this? You become happy!

"That's the true reward for me – their appreciation and the word of mouth. It's the real deal, because it comes from genuine appreciation. Customers are happy, they talk about the product, and that's why we are growing so quickly."

The past seven years have been a whirlwind, but Giorgio wouldn't have it any other way.

"So many good things have happened to me in Australia. I met my wife Tania, we fell in love, had two daughters, my life changed completely. I've been so busy, and Australia has been so good to me. It's definitely my new home." 🌐