



Gentle focus on nature and quality keeps winning medals – and customers

Way ahead of its time, Tweedvale Milk began processing its own milk on-farm 30 years ago. This year once again, the Adelaide Hills business has won medals in the DIAA Australian Dairy Product Competition across its small, carefully crafted product range. And just like its first (gold) medal back in 2003, the excitement has not abated, as it told *Australian Dairy Foods*.

Dairy is as integral to the Lorenzetti family as the first rays of sun are to warming a dewy paddock – or a boutique, non-homogenised milk is to create the perfect coffee.

In 1974, Italian-born **Giuliano and Rita Lorenzetti** bought a small dairy farm in Lobethal, in the Adelaide Hills. It was a step on from the farm they'd bought four years earlier in partnership with Giuliano's brother. Their children **Carlo and Gabriella** grew up on the 28-hectare (69-acre) farm, where the family milked 40 cows and ran a Holstein Friesian stud.

Today, Carlo runs the business, while Gabbi handles the marketing side. Their parents, unsurprisingly, are still involved, and still live just a hill away

from the processing plant that now sits adjacent to the original dairy.

The family-run business has 15 staff and works with various contractors weekly. They make four products – two milks and two creams – which all won medals in the 2021 DIAA Australian Dairy Competition. (See box.)

Carlo says Tweedvale Milk prides itself on quality.

"To come away with a medal for each of the four products we make is amazing – and a testament to the hard work of our team. Our products have consistently won gold at the DIAA Australian Dairy Product Competitions, and this has now become a minimum benchmark for us."

2021 wins

Gold medals:

- Tweedvale Full Cream Milk
- Tweedvale Pure Pouring Cream
- Tweedvale Pure Double Cream (their most popular product)



Silver medal:

- Tweedvale Reduced Fat Milk



Tweedvale first began entering DIAA product competitions nearly two decades ago.

“The idea was to get a measure on how our products compared to others in the market. As a small processor, we really didn’t know how we would measure up, but we knew that our customers loved our milk and baristas loved the way it performed.”

The product, Tweedvale’s non-homogenised Traditional Milk, won a gold medal in the 2003 DIAA Australian Dairy Product Competition.

Carlo says, “Being recognised by the DIAA year after year, makes all the hard work worthwhile – it really is very motivating! Our team and farmers share the joy and take pride in each win as it highlights that we are on the right path and delivering consistency to our customers. Even back then, our customer base was loyal.”

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“As a business, we have chosen to produce a small number of products to an excellent standard, and that’s what we are known for.”

Family strength

With clear admiration, Carlo says the Tweedvale business came about when his parents – who both came from dairy farming backgrounds in Italy – “made some brave decisions”. Part of the business’s success lies in the different ideas and strengths the two generations bring – as well as mutual respect.

“It was difficult to make ends meet with a small herd of Holstein Friesians on a small dairy farm in the Adelaide Hills, so Giuliano and Rita jumped at the chance to supply a local cheese manufacturer directly. This was successful for a while, until that cheese manufacturer’s business outgrew my parents’ little farm.”

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True to form, in the meantime the Lorenzettis found other customers who needed milk to produce yoghurt and gelati.

Carlo says it was in these early days that little seeds began to sprout of vertically integrating the business. What if they could pasteurise and package their milk under their own label? Would there be a market? Could it be done?

“At the time, there were no other small processors in South Australia

for them to learn from, but through the grapevine they found a second-hand pasteuriser for sale and thought perhaps it was a sign that this was the road they should go down.”

So with no instruction manual – and no one to teach her how to use it – Rita took it upon herself to work out how to operate the pasteuriser. Learning by trial and error, her words at the time were: “Well, I will try, and if I break it, that’s the end of it!” However, she didn’t break it,

and that was only the beginning of Tweedvale’s on-farm value adding.

Carlo says around the same time, a savvy barista at an Adelaide café which used Tweedvale Milk for its gelati, tried it out in a cappuccino.

“He couldn’t believe the result: a thick, glossy micro-foam, full-bodied flavour and a creaminess that balanced the coffee’s acidity. His enthusiasm buoyed our confidence, and we began supplying pasteurised milk for coffee.”



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The barista “couldn’t believe the result: a thick, glossy micro-foam, full-bodied flavour and a creaminess that balanced the coffee’s acidity”. Carlo says his enthusiasm buoyed Tweedvale’s confidence, and they began supplying pasteurised milk for coffee.

Fast forward some 30 years, and Tweedvale Milk remains a barista favourite in Adelaide. “Over the years, various coffee brands have championed our products because it partners so well with their coffee beans.”

Is the fact that they are a family business part of the success?

Carlo says, “We like to think that because we are a family business, we have an extra layer of pride in the product, and if something goes wrong we very much take it personally. The brand is very much a product of hard work and sheer determination.”

He says Rita and Giuliano understand dairy farming, and how to bring the best out of each cow.

“They believed – long before the brand was created – that happy cows produce better milk. They knew

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from their years of experience that a balanced diet of grass, grain and hay produced a full-flavoured milk, and they had experience with machinery and production.”

When Carlo joined the team straight out of university, he brought fresh enthusiasm and ideas to the table. He helped develop the reduced-fat product and found a market for the pouring cream and double cream that resulted. Now general manager,

Carlo says he continues to strive for quality and consistency every day.

Milk source important

Tweedvale sources raw milk from ongoing partnership arrangements with several small local dairy farms.

“Back in 1974 when Giuliano and Rita bought the dairy farm in the Adelaide Hills, they did so knowing that the environment was uniquely suited to dairy farming. The area was once rich with dairy farms, but now, sadly, these are few and far between as small farms became less viable.

“We believe that small herds produce a better quality product: the farms are less stressful, the paddocks are less populated and the cow-to-farmer ratio has more balance. We are very proud to be able to work with some of the last local small dairy farms – helping keep their businesses viable

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while ensuring that our product benefits from their ability to remain at a manageable size.”

Carlo says because their milk comes from relatively small, local dairy farms, the food miles are low between production, processing and delivery.

“And, because we only make four products, we are able to deliver high quality consistently. Our milk is less processed than most as well – being pasteurised and non-homogenised means less processing and with no additives, such as permeates or thickeners. Our products are true artisan products as close to nature as possible.”

Suppliers and processes

Most of the production process is handled in-house: the milk is collected daily from local dairy

farms, pasteurised and packaged at Tweedvale’s Lobethal processing plant, and distributed from there. Some 80% of product is delivered via a local refrigerated courier company, which Carlo says works really well.

There are a few key suppliers who have helped Tweedvale reach where they are.

“We are incredibly grateful to all our suppliers for working with us and growing with us over the years. We do want to give a special shout out to Lobethal Freightlines – a family-owned local business who have been with us since the beginning, and, while the Cudlee Creek Bushfires may seem like a lifetime ago, we have to say a massive thank you to E. L. Weinert & Co who supplied us with fuel for our generator during those awful days.”

Markets

When Tweedvale Milk began in the late 1990s, its target market were cafés and restaurants.

“This has changed over the years with the growth of independent retailers in South Australia, and the emerging trend of supporting locally owned and produced products. In a lot of ways, Tweedvale Milk was ahead of the curve: we produced the product long before people knew they wanted it!

“These days, our market is split 30% food service and 70% retail via independent retailers – and this is a good balance for us. The people who love our products look out for food that is sourced and made locally: they are conscious of low food miles and appreciate artisan products.”

Carlo says demand outweighs supply, which he describes as “a great spot to be in!”

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"We currently supply metro Adelaide as well as pockets in the Barossa, the Fleurieu Peninsula and, of course, the Adelaide Hills."

Sales channel wise, Carlo says they have focused on independent retailers and high-end fruit and vegetable stores.

"As our primary channels, these allowed us to grow incrementally, supplying additional stores as production grew. We also found that these retailers shared our brand values of supporting local South Australian businesses and locally produced products; they are a great fit for our brand."

He says while Tweedvale Milk doesn't currently sell online, some of its retailers do. As for export, his one comment is: "Not at this stage – but never say never!"



"... helping keep their businesses viable while ensuring that our product benefits from their ability to remain at a manageable size."

– Carlo Lorenzetti

Future

Carlo says Tweedvale Milk is currently working on growth strategies that will capitalise on the brand they have created and allow them to continue to deliver top-notch products.

Regarding exciting developments in the pipeline, he says there "are a lot

of conversations happening at the minute".

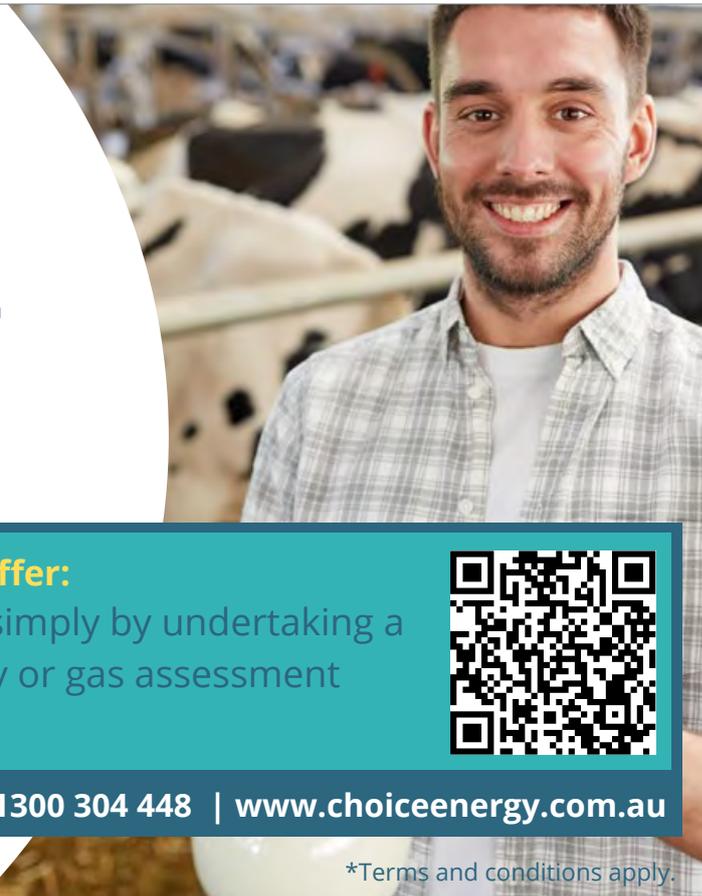
"All of them positive and looking to the future – so stay tuned!

"Our primary focus is always the delivery of a consistently high-quality product for our consumers. In the future, there is huge potential to expand the product range and expand the market for our products – the rest of Australia needs to get their hands on Tweedvale Pure Double Cream!

"But we take things one step at a time with quality always at the forefront of any move we make." ■



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