

Milk, the way nature made it

INGLENOOK Dairy is reminding baby boomers of what milk used to taste like and teaching younger generations what real milk is.

By Renee Robinson

In just four years of operation, the Dunnstoun based dairy has won gold medals at the Melbourne Fine Food awards and the Dairy Industry Association awards, and was recently named one of the top three milk producers in the country at the Australian Grand Dairy awards – a first ever for a small dairy producer.

Owners Troy and Rachael Peterken said the dairy grew from humble beginnings thanks to the vision of Rachael's grandmother and father.

"Inglenook Dairy started when my gran bought a house here in Dunnstoun and around it was box hedges. She called it Inglenook, meaning cosy corner," Rachael said.

"When the house burned down, Gran's brother from Colac gave her a bull and six cows. He drove them from Colac to here on foot. That was how it all started."

Rachael said her father Basil Britt was the youngest of seven children and he decided he was going to buy and own land as far as the eye could see and fulfil his mother's dream.

"Dad took over the farm which at the time was 20 acres with 20 cows, and grew it to over 1000 acres with 250 Holstein Friesia cows. He taught us to think big."

Rachael said when there was an increasing demand for raw milk six years ago, she and her husband Troy decided to build a factory and give people what they wanted.

"We had to do a lot ourselves. Most of the factory came from Queensland from a business that had shut down. Troy went up and pulled it apart and it all came down in pieces, which somehow he re-built. It took us two years to complete it with the help of extended family. When it was finished I was beside myself with excitement. I felt like this was the fulfilment of Granny Britt's dream."

However the dream wasn't without further challenges. Six months before Troy and Rachael launched their product, the price of milk in big chain supermarkets was slashed to \$1 a litre.

"The first three years were extremely challenging and we got very committed financially," Rachael said.

She said their first product delivery four years ago was two crates of milk to Wilsons Fruit and Vegetables in Ballarat, and they now distributed 20,000 litres across Victoria each week.

People loved it.

"We've never had to advertise our product ever. We've been really lucky through word of mouth and the media coverage we've got from winning awards. Most of our milk goes in coffee. Natures Cargo distributes to cafes across Victoria. We've got 250 outlets now and the majority are coffee makers. Melbourne embraced us so quickly."

Inglenook Dairy produces unhomogenised full cream milk, homogenised milk and low fat milk.

All of the milk is tested from the raw milk stage through to the finished product for e Coli, fat and protein levels. The milk is pasteurised at 76 degrees Celcius for 15 seconds to kill off any bad bacteria.

"All of our testing is done in our own lab and one batch in ten is sent to an independent lab in Melbourne. We've got an in-house quality control manager now and our systems are more streamlined. We get audited every six months and, because we're export registered, we're tested even more."

Rachael said maintaining the product was the easy bit.

"As a dairy producer you work seven days a week and every public holiday.



Rachael Peterken. Photo by Renee Robinson

The cows don't rest. They need to be milked twice a day. The cost of producing one litre of milk is massive. Dairy farmers are the only people who say how much will you give me instead of setting the price.

Rachael and Troy are passionate about supporting local producers who in turn provide children with healthy, Australian produce.

"Dad is the hardest working man I have met in my life. People need to be more passionate about taking responsibility for supporting our local producers. Farmers who are selling up generally have no choice. The government doesn't have to give farmers money, but give them opportunity.

"My philosophy is pay a higher price for locally grown produce now or your children are going to be eating absolute rubbish. You'll be taking away their right to choose healthy and homegrown.

"Everything that we buy is driven by our children. If they like something they'll get their parents to buy it. They are the key to their own future."

Inglenook Dairy milk can be purchased at Bacchus Marsh Foodworks and Ballan IGA. For more information visit inglenookdairy.com.au