PRODUCE AWARDS

Victorian cheesemaker named best in Australia for its first-rate fromage

Long Paddock Cheese

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DELICIOUS. TEAM
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"We want to see the Australian cheese industry cast off its cultural cringe and celebrate its own identity."

When a craft remains largely unchanged for hundreds of years, it becomes not only a story of food, but a story of people. Drawing on centuries of cheesemaking knowledge from Europe, while paying respects to thousands of years of Indigenous ownership, for the artisans at Long Paddock Cheese in the Victorian town of Castlemaine, every element of their practice is mindful and intentional.

From sourcing organic milk from local pasture-raised cows to the on-site cheese school where they train existing and prospective cheesemakers and small-scale dairy producers, founders Ivan and Julie Larcher, Alison Lansley, Ann-Marie Monda, and Carla Meurs are on a mission to help Australia's cheese culture flourish.

It is this dedication to small-scale, high-quality, and ethically responsible cheesemaking that has seen the fromagers recognised time and time again for their outstanding produce. Most recently, Long Paddock Cheese took out the top gong at the 2024 Harvey Norman *delicious.* Produce Awards for the From the Dairy category.

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On the win, co-founder Alison Lansley has found the experience "deeply humbling."

"We know how many fine Australian cheesemakers are out there – so many more than when we first started our business, which is fantastic."

Two of the Long Paddock Cheeses dazzled the panel of judges tasked with finding the best produce in Australia – the gooey, bark-wrapped Vacherin Mont d'Or-style Driftwood, and the semi-firm Raclette-inspired Banksia.

"To have the tick of approval of Australia's top chefs is an immense honour."

"Australia's chefs play a major role in understanding what we and other Australian artisan cheesemakers are doing in aiming to make fine cheeses that are different to bland industrially-made cheese favoured by supermarkets.

They also inspire Australians to try Australian produce that is deliciously different. They are very helpful in discussing and showing how best to enjoy our cheese, whether on a cheeseboard or as part of a marvellous dish that showcases the cheese."

So what makes Long Paddock cheeses so good? To Lansley's mind, it comes down to a few simple factors – starting with Head Cheesemaker, Ivan Larcher. "Not only is he a brilliant cheesemaker, but he wants to teach and consult to other cheesemakers, passing on as much of his knowledge as he can, and delights in seeing them improve the quality of their cheese."

The Long Paddock team have deliberately chosen to make and sell products that are not similar to other Australian cheeses, showing the skill of the French-trained cheesemakers and using high-quality certified-organic cow's milk from a single family-owned farm – French technique meets Australian terroir.

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"We love and cherish our ancient continent, in particular the area of central Victoria on which we work and live, Dja Dja Wurrung country, and all its distinguishing geology and biology.

"Our small soft cheeses are named after small soft flowers and trees of the area – Silver Wattle, Black Wattle, Sundew, Grevillea, Flannel Flower, Boronia; and our blue and semihard cheeses are named after rocks and larger trees of the area – Granite, Bluestone, Banksia, Ironbark.

"It takes a while for people to get used to what we are doing in naming our cheeses after Australian flora and geology. But, just like the Australian wine industry, we want to see the Australian cheese industry cast off its cultural cringe and celebrate its own identity."

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