

great aussie pie

best pie maker in australia



L to R: Rob, Bill and John Stevenson

Judged No 1 2003 - 2004

The most contested and publicised baking competition in Australia has this year been won by Village Hot Bake Bakery Cafe in Dubbo, NSW.

The 14th Great Aussie Pie Competition held at Fine Foods in Sydney on 9th September 2003 was the most fiercely contended competition yet. Pie makers from every part of Australia sent 1450 pies to be scrutinised by 13 judges over a five-day period.

Competition organiser, John Ross said, "I have been running this competition now for 14 years and it never ceases to amaze me just how competitive the baking industry is. Every year we see an increased number of entries and this year witnessed the largest increase of 33% over last year."

"The two main reasons for the huge popularity of this competition are the inherent publicity and promotion for the winner and the feedback from judges on how individual's pies are fared and advice from judges on how individual's pies can be improved," added John Ross.

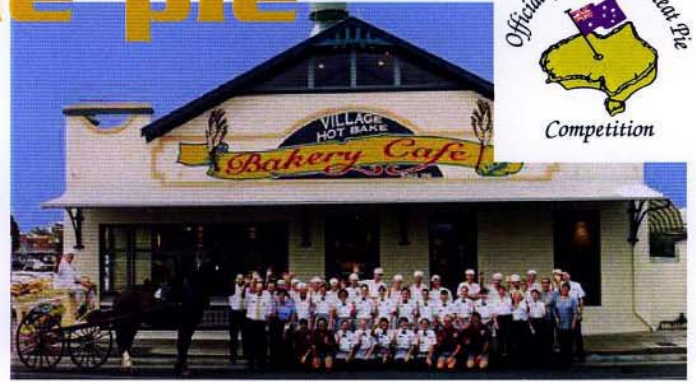
Chief Pie Judge, Mike French said, "The quality of product we are now judging is on many occasions brilliant. Most pie makers put extreme effort into their formulas and production methods and the reason is obvious, the reward for carrying the title of Best Pie Maker in Australia has seen previous winners businesses blow out of proportion. Due to competitions in general, the industry standards are improving year on end. Rank and file are seeing that it's not just a few privileged that win, anyone can."

A Unique Family Tradition

"Early Rise Baking Company" and "Village Hot Bake Bakery Cafe Dubbo," winner of the 2003 Great Aussie Meat Pie Competition is owned and operated by 37 year old Bill Stevenson and his two brothers Robert 35 and John 31. The three Stevenson brothers have been baking all their lives and come from a third generation background of family bakers.

Their family tradition is widespread. Both grandfathers were bakers Aussie Stevenson and Nick Kosseris and also their father and uncles which makes their family heritage rather unique. Not many families could boast that type of record.

Their history in the baking game started back in 1918 when their grandfather from their father's side, Aussie Stevenson became a baker.



Since those early days of delivering bakery products by horse and cart to Dubbo residents, the Stevenson's have passed down three generations of baking tradition and secret recipes. With their inherited culture, and passion for the industry linked to years of experience this has allowed for the creation of their modern, country-style bakery cafe, which is no doubt one of the best in Australia.

The three Stevenson brothers are all master bakers and pastrycooks by trade. The brothers all grew up in the bakery scene working before and after school and weekends at very young ages. After the sudden misfortune of the death of their father baker John Stevenson Snr, Bill started managing the bakery when he was only 16 years of age. Robert entered the business next and John broke the mould by taking employment as a baker with Woolworths. After 18 months there John also joined his brothers in the family business.

In 1990 the business had outdated machinery and equipment and a staff of 15. Throughout the following 7 years the brothers gradually invested in more modern equipment and machinery and in 1998 expanded their shop to be four times its original size and become one of Australia's first bakery cafes of any note. In line with the bakery cafe expansion the manufacturing area was also expanded and refurbished to comply with pressing HACCP standards.

They now have one of Australia's most successful and unique bakeries seating 100 people with 3 different dining areas and employing a staff of 85.

The Future

While the wholesale division of the business has always been a large concern, the business recently took on a name change to Earlyrise Baking Company and now supplies leading national and independent supermarket chains, schools, corner stores as well as the food service industry. Being one of the first companies in Australia to develop an innovative low fat range of pies and sausage rolls and being registered with the healthy school canteens of Australia since 1994 these products are now in high demand, especially since the recent introduction of government legislation stating that all schools across Australia must use registered nutritional compliant products. With taking on multi national companies such as Mrs Macs, Patties and Vilis pies in the premium pie market Early Rise Baking Company have found that these company's products have no comparison to their Premium Pie and Gourmet Pie Ranges. Their current retail marketing focus is on tourists and the wholesale division marketing focus is on expanding sales on their popular products. Their future looks exciting now they have won the Great Aussie Meat Pie Competition and the brothers will be taking a serious approach at distributing their pies on a much larger scale.

Those interested in distributorships can contact John Stevenson at Earlyrise Baking Company on (02) 6884 6878 or 0408 846 878.