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# Churning out an idea that's full of flavour

BY NATASHA SHERWOOD

A MYRTLEFORD company is proving that it is possible to make butter better.

Mother and daughter team Bronwyn and Naomi Ingleton began churning their butter, made from a unique culture, in August at The Butter Factory.

The chefs' innovative thinking led the women to be awarded the New and Emerging Agribusiness Award at the Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum Agribusiness Innovation and Entrepreneurship Awards last Wednesday night.

The Ingletons have been running a cafe out of the historic building for the past four years.

"A lot of customers would come in and ask to see the butter being made," Naomi said.

"We were making butter for the restaurant and people really liked the product.

"So I did a bit of research and found there was a market for it and decided to go for it."

An Aus Industry grant got them up and running last year and plenty of research ensued.

Then the butter factory had to be built — but in a way that hadn't been seen for decades.

"A lot of the equipment I had to find in scrap metal yards and farms and places like that because they don't make them any more and they are not in use," Naomi said.

"A lot of the butter factories these days have gone to continuous butter making rather than batch churn, which is what we're doing."

They also had to source cream.

"We didn't want to get cream that had any of the emulsifiers or vegetable gums or anything like that in them," she said.

"We approached Murray Goulburn because they are our local co-op and we wanted the product to be part of the community."

The site was once the Murray Goulburn Butter Factory many years ago, so the choice had historic significance too.

The dairy farmers were so pleased to be part of the venture, they even installed new machinery needed for the process.

The Ingletons had special needs to make their butter as they strove to compete with imported European butters rather than the domestic.

The main difference is their butter is cultured.

"We're sort of making our butter with sour cream," Naomi said.

"When my grandmother used to make butter every day she'd just leave the cream out overnight and it would naturally sour."

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Obviously that can't be done these days and the cultures give them a lot of control of the product with constant monitoring.

"We can maintain some sort of consistency which is hard to do with live cultures and a handmade product," she said.

Finding a unique culture was tough, but with the help of the Dairy Innovations Department at Werribee, the Ingletons found one that gave them their preferred flavour profile.

Learning how to make butter in batches was also a challenge because it just isn't done in Australia.

Enter the internet.

Naomi has trolled through countless websites and even made contact with a Swedish butter maker who supplies butter to a lot of Michelin star restaurants in Europe.

They've been using Skype to communicate and he's been a font of invaluable knowledge.

"His site's actually in Swedish but I used Google translate," she said.

The Butter Factory has also been assisted by Wodonga engineer Trevor Newton.

"If we can't find it he'll build it and change it and make it happen," Naomi said.

She used the example of a butter churn they found in a scrap metal yard in Korumburra.

"We searched the internet for something similar and he built it the same as that," she said.

"He's also manufactured our butter trolleys and all sorts of

stuff."

About 800kg of butter a week is being churned at the factory.

"We can do up to about 2.4 tonne a week without compromising our product or sanity," Naomi said.

"It's constantly evolving because the cream's different at different times of the year.

"It's a real organic process in that every churn is different."

The Ingletons have also found uses for butter milk.

"When you churn the cream the butterfat in cream, the solids turn into solids and that makes your butter," Naomi explained.

"Then there's the liquid that's left over, which is butter milk."

The butter milk is being sold in 300ml and 1 litre portions and is even being fed to pigs in Wooragee so they can serve butter milk fed pork on menus.

Excess butter milk is being turned into soap, with plans for a skincare range in the pipeline.

The butter is being sold to local and Melbourne restaurants and will be available in retail out-



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**— NAOMI INGLETON**