



OPENING THE GATE

Inspiring producers to pursue growth by sharing of local success stories

L'Artisan Cheese



Matthieu Megard is a Frenchman, and like any decent Frenchman, he knows cheese. L'Artisan cheese is a prestigious brand and Matthieu's commitment to fine cheese is characteristic of an artisan's commitment to his craft.

Building a trusted and recognisable brand has been Matthieu's main marketing strategy and it underpins the success story that is L'Artisan Cheese. "People have to recognise your brand. That is where all the hard work needs to go."

It's an ethos that Matthieu adheres to. In 2010 his idea was simple: make good quality, French-style cheese, using locally-sourced milk. Matthieu's background and knowledge in cheese-making equipment meant he was able to translate his skills into a viable business opportunity. He saw that there was an opportunity here in Australia to provide some types of cheese which were typically imported, expensive and not always of great quality.

In the early days, working from the original facility location in Timboon in Western Victoria, the start of the week was

dedicated to making the cheese and the end of the week to loading up the car and float and banging on doors in Melbourne doing cheese deliveries. Matthieu truly stands by his strategy of being the face behind the product.

How else did he get the brand out there? "Farmers' markets are very important in marketing a product, especially at the beginning", as were shows and exhibitions – anywhere where he could increase recognition of the brand and grow the business profile. Matthieu remarks that "Making really good cheese must remain an absolute priority", but the intensive marketing and face-to-face interaction at retailers' doors is not to be understated.

The strategy has worked. The amount of cheese produced and sold today from the new location in Geelong is ten times the original sales numbers.

"People's tastes are changing. When we started we had the Mountain Man, which is today the best seller, and that cheese...nobody wanted to buy it. It was too strong for a lot of



“People have to recognise your brand.”

people, and not strong enough for a lot of people and it was sitting in the middle and there was no market for it. Now it has found its feet.”

L’Artisan’s target market is primarily people with a taste for fine foods, and Matthieu finds that a lot of his customers have travelled, and have experienced fine international cheese. They want to continue that experience at home in Australia. While there is good quality cheese in Australia, it can be hard to find.

L’Artisan Cheese sells through a distributor in Melbourne, which is a business model that Matthieu says works strongly in their favour. The distributor takes care of the logistics, and Matthieu can concentrate on the cheese-making and branding. Because the distributor sells many different products from different suppliers, Matthieu says the key to making the strategy a success is making sure that the distributor and all the sales staff know the L’Artisan products intimately. “We have to make sure that when they (distributors) go and see customers that they think of us first”. So good is their relationship that Matthieu and his assistant Carol have been known to pair up with the sales staff on their sales routes throughout Melbourne and Geelong!



HIGHLIGHTS:

- 1 Lots of effort put into building a trusted and recognisable brand.
- 2 Matthieu spends a lot of time with customers and is recognised as the face of the brand.
- 3 Promotion focuses on the company’s local identity.
- 4 Maintains a strong relationship with the distributor.



Click to watch the **Opening the Gate** film



“You taste only so much with your taste buds, in the end it’s all in your brain – you have to tell a story.”



To supplement the work of the distributor, Matthieu continues to be the face behind the brand, visiting existing customers, attending exhibitions – consistently maintaining a presence that keeps L'Artisan cheese on everybody's lips.

Matthieu's visibility and relationships with his customers also brings in unexpected bonuses. He receives regular promotion through local newspapers and lifestyle magazines, and has restaurant owners and chefs promoting his products for him! In 2016, L'Artisan was nominated by a Melbourne chef for the Delicious Magazine Awards and their cheese "Raclette" won a Gold Medal.

Matthieu strongly believes in educating people about the products they buy, and he spends a lot of time taking people through the range, and explaining its features. "The history behind the brand is fundamental. You taste only so much with your taste buds, in the end it's all in your brain – you have to tell a story". Matthieu is proud that their milk is locally sourced, and that the cheese is locally produced in Geelong, and he promotes this local identity strongly in his marketing.

Sales are strong and Matthieu is busy watching the food trends and continuing to experiment with new cheeses to suit the ever-changing demands of the customer. His top tip for new starters? "Get out there. Make yourself known. Know what you want to be, what you want to do."



OTHER PROFILES THAT MIGHT INTEREST YOU:



WesEggs



**Bellarine
Smoked Fish
Company**



**Pennyroyal
Raspberry Farm**