

australian flavours.

Sydney restaurant veteran Lucio Galletto.  
Opposite: Insalata di mozzarella con prosciutto  
(mozzarella salad with prosciutto, recipe p 104)





# *heart & home*

After nearly 30 years at his Sydney restaurant, Italian-born Lucio Galletto is as enamoured as ever with his adopted home and his role as the consummate host.

RECIPES **LOGAN CAMPBELL** WORDS **ALISON PICKEL** PHOTOGRAPHY **BRETT STEVENS**

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Art, much of it by regular patrons, lines the walls at Lucio's in Paddington, Sydney. Below left: Waiter Aldo Zibellini pours coffee. Opposite: Head chef Logan Campbell (front), with the Lucio's kitchen team.



98 delicious.



The tale behind Lucio Galletto's eponymous Paddington fine diner isn't just the story of a restaurant – it's a love story, too. It's clear on the plate, carefully crafted with the best produce. It's on the walls where artworks donated by famous patrons such as Sidney Nolan and John Olsen are proudly hung. It's in the dining room and office where Lucio's family works alongside him. But most of all, it's obvious when you hear the passion in his voice. This man is head over heels.

Though he's a restaurateur rather than a chef, Lucio's commitment to the promotion of the cuisine and his status as the current president of the Council of Italian Restaurants in Australia (CIRA) often sees his name in the company of other dining legends, such as Armando Percuoco and Beppi Polese. But to really understand his passion, you need to go back to the beginning.

The story starts in Bocca di Magra, a small fishing town in the Italian region of Liguria, where his parents, aunt and uncle opened a small seafood restaurant. Lucio would help in the kitchen, chopping bucketloads of garlic and parsley, but preferred to work the dining room and bar. "I liked the contact with the public," he explains. "I really love people."

It was in the bar one day that a travelling Australian girl, Sally Stanford, walked in for a cappuccino. "It was love at first sight," says Lucio. "Luckily for both of us." The young couple married in Italy, before moving to Australia in 1977.

In this new country, Lucio was exposed to range of exciting cuisines – Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, Lebanese – but when it came to Italian restaurants, it seemed that many were too "Australianised", serving over-cooked pasta and cardboard-like scaloppini. However, he soon discovered a true taste of Italy could be found in Sydney. "There were many fantastic places doing food like they did at home. Just families in little restaurants, cooking regional Italian food."

When he opened Lucio's in 1981, the menu reflected this regional style, not just from his native Liguria, but also from other parts of Northern Italy. "I'm inspired by all regions of Italy. I'm still learning, still discovering. My passion for food is never-ending, and I hold my family responsible!"

Indeed, Lucio's love for food takes him back to his family in Italy. "I didn't really understand it as a kid," he says. "My mother would be in one corner saying 'I only make pesto with the basil that gets warmth from the afternoon sun', and my uncle would be in the other saying, 'Oh the mussels, only the ones from this fisherman!' I thought I was living in a family of mad people, but now I realise how important it is. You can't make a good dish if you don't have the right produce."

Head chef Logan Campbell, who has been at the restaurant since 2001, shares Lucio's philosophy. "He has a natural feel for Italian food," says Lucio. "He understands



**"Even though I return to Italy every year, Australia is my home. This is what I love."**

seasonal, fresh produce and finds creative ways to use it. I think we've had some of our best years with him."

Lucio's Australian family is also an integral part of the restaurant. His 25-year-old son Matteo works in the dining room and is charged with the care of the wine list, while Sally and daughter Michela keep things running behind the scenes. So what's it like working so closely with his family? "Well it's good and it's bad. It's bad because I can't fire him," he laughs, pointing in the direction of Matteo. "Actually, it's wonderful. Matteo has a really good eye and he loves pleasing people. I think he has the family curse!"

In 2001, having spent more than half his life in this country, Lucio decided it was time to become an Australian citizen. "It was very emotional. I embarrassed my wife by crying when they gave me my citizenship."

Australia is proud to have him, too. Two years ago, Lucio was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for his services as a restaurateur and author, and his contribution to the arts. "It is such an honour, especially for someone like me who came from another country," says Lucio. "Even though I return to Italy every year, Australia is my home. This is what I love."

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