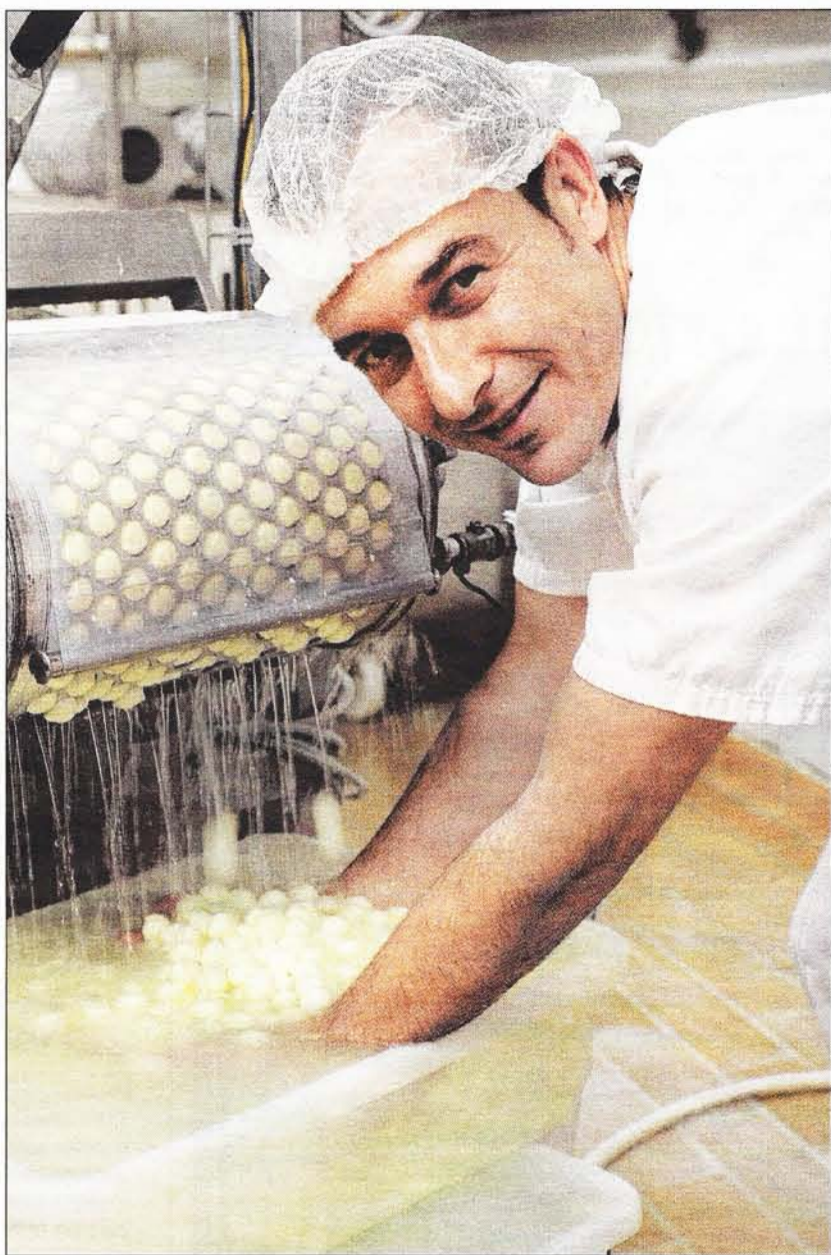


# Family firm really is the big cheese



**HANDS FULL:** Claude Cicchiello . . . "an achievement". **Picture:** MICHAEL MARSCHALL

**NIGEL AUSTIN**  
RURAL EDITOR

WHEN Claude Cicchiello started working with his parents, Gerardo and Rosa, at La Casa Del Formaggio just over 20 years ago, the company had no other employees and used about 1000 litres of milk a week.

Today, it uses 180,000 litres of milk a week, employs 55 people and is the national market leader in the bocconcini category with a 60 per cent share.

"That is quite an achievement for what was a small South Australian company and we are quite proud of that," Mr Cicchiello said.

"Our growth has been mostly achieved through product development and innovation, by listening to our customers and a lot of hard work."

Many Australian cheese lovers would have eaten La Casa Del Formaggio's products such as bocconcini, ricotta, mozzarella,

pecorino, mascarpone, parmesan and haloumi, and are probably not aware that they are made in South Australia.

La Casa Del Formaggio's fortunes have risen with changing consumer habits in Australia and rapidly growing demand for its bocconcini on pizzas, bruschetta, pasta and in salads.

Mr Cicchiello, 36, assumed the role of managing director about 10 years ago, after being groomed for the position since starting with the company at the age of 16.

"Our business took a new direction about 10 years ago, when we started focusing on non-traditional consumers and targeted national supermarket chains," he said.

As a consequence, it has been growing by 30 per cent a year for the past five years, with key outlets including Coles, Woolworths and the IGA and Foodland supermarket chains.

**Continued Page 84**

# Family firm the big cheese

**From Page 81**

"We are about to embark on a program of market research to understand our customers better so we can take the next stage of growth," Mr Cicchiello said.

"The potential for growth is unlimited as the Australian consumer becomes more and more educated about specialty cheese and its uses. As consumers become better educated about new ways of preparing food and using specialty cheeses, my aim is to become the largest cheese producer in Australia.

"When people think boccon-

cini, we want them to think La Casa Del Formaggio."

Mr Cicchiello said bocconcini consumption was growing at about 20 per cent a year, but was still a relatively small category and he wanted to help raise consumption.

He believes there is good potential for growth in soft cheeses such as brie, which he believes will come through further education and promotion.

Mr Cicchiello's approach led to his winning the 2009 Premier's Food Industry Young Leaders Award, which he describes as a significant recognition of the

firm's success. "The award has helped raise our profile in SA and interstate," Mr Cicchiello said.

"It's definitely good to get your business and your profile out there. It is also nice to be recognised for what you do in your business every day and I encourage businesses to get involved in the awards and the networking opportunities."

SA's food businesses are encouraged to enter this year's Premier's Food Industry Awards, now expanded to include any food-related business.

Entry details and applications at [www.safoodawards.com.au](http://www.safoodawards.com.au)