



ANDREAS WIDMER

SWISS CAKE & COFFEE SHOP, PASTRY CHEF AND OWNER

I like to produce things and then see people really enjoy it. To me, that's priceless.

We're very happy when regular customers from down south travel straight from the airport to us when they arrive in Cairns.

It's also wonderful to hear regular local customers who travel overseas say that they can't find anything as good as us – that's nice.

It's very difficult for me to choose my favourite cake or pastry here. I like the danishes, vanilla slices and the berry slice.

We steadily add new products and start by making it a Friday special. We then see how it goes and if our customers like it.

When Susanne and I first arrived in Australia 15 years ago we travelled around

Australia but quickly found our way to Cairns. We liked either Perth or here but Cairns definitely won.

Before we left Switzerland we had in mind to start a business over here and we actually bought equipment back home and packed it all in a shipping container with our home gear to come to Australia.

We have gone really well with our shop – we can't complain – though 2008 hit us very hard, like it hit everyone.

We started off 13 years ago with just me in production, Susanne, who is a qualified chef, and two others in front.

It quickly took off and I had to get a second hand to help me in production. Now we have seven others helping Susanne and I.

We've always wanted to be self-employed.

I had been working in hotels and often had to do overtime – usually unpaid.

I figured if I had to work so much I might as well do it for myself.

My parents had a restaurant business in Switzerland and as a child I always worked in their business. For them customer service was very important.

I had grown up working with people in a business – these days people often don't work in a business until the day they actually start, so they don't have that natural background.

I feel like I'm a maitre d', doing a lot of organising, clearing tables quickly and making sure people are not left waiting.

My day starts at 4am when I come in and turn on the equipment in the shop and

help our baker/pastry chef with the danish pastries.

When I get the chance to have some breakfast I have what I call my "Jenny Craig" breakfast, even though it's not – a combination of chicken, cheese, asparagus and lots of salad dressing.

Sometimes we think it would be nice to expand or get a second shop but it would just mean longer hours for Susanne and me and that's not what we want.

In fact, to streamline our production, we stopped baking bread loaves three months ago.

Some people were very unhappy about that but it means a lot of energy and cost savings, which we were forced to do in these tough economic times.



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