

Simon Gough was born and raised on a farm in the Western Districts of Victoria. The lifestyle there was very much “living off the land”, whether it was processing the farm’s sheep and cattle, pulling up the carrots from the garden a few minutes before dinner, collecting field mushrooms and wild blackberries in season, or hunting for rabbits, wild duck and quail.

Simon began his career in food working in a food importer’s warehouse while paying his way through University. On completion of his degree in Microbiology, he began working as a cash van salesman selling cheese to some of the top restaurants in Melbourne, including Mietta’s and Jacques Reymond’s.

It was at this time that Simon realised that all the flavours the chefs were looking for were exactly what he had been brought up on – fresh and flavoursome.

After a few years Simon decided to travel through Europe and became a convert to the concept of local produce. On his return he found that the company he worked for had just stopped trading, so he started working with a small Italian cheese producer which had been producing exclusively for his previous boss and consequently had no sales. Unfortunately, the cheesemaker left also, so Simon had to not only sell some product, but also had to learn to make them – finally the Microbiology started to come in handy.

After a few years Simon and his colleague decided to merge the business with the newly formed Yarra Valley Dairy, where he was instrumental in creating a number of new products that are still seen as iconic in the Australian market. For example, four out of the seven cheeses selected for the corporate boxes at the 2000 Olympics were made by Yarra Valley Dairy at this time.

With the business well established, Simon again felt the itch of the travel bug and decided to learn the traditional cheesemaking techniques through Italy, France and England (with a holiday jaunt through the Middle East on the way, which is where the Labna idea came from). On his return, he decided to set up his own cheesemaking facility. Not wanting to step on toes at his old job in the Yarra, he decided to make a local product for the Sydney market, and the Hunter region seemed like the perfect choice (his appreciation of good wine may have had some influence on this decision also).

Simon completed the building of the factory and opened the doors of Binnorie Dairy in April 2003 and the business has gone from strength to strength, due in no small part to the fantastic support received from the local community, something Simon remains eternally grateful for.

Simon is a sponsor and strong supporter of Hunter Chefs & co, not only due to gratitude for the support of the local restaurants, but also because he believes it is the obligation of all businesses in the area to provide support for the next generation of foodies to help the region go from strength to strength.