

Taking his own sweet time

Claire Heaney

AFTER working as a chef for 15 years, Glen Ueckerman was looking for a change.

Returning from London, he did not want to start his own restaurant, but was keen to keep doing something in the hospitality industry.

“I had always had in the back of my mind the idea of manufacturing some sort of food product,” he said.

With his photographer wife, Monique, he was tossing around ideas for a business.

They wanted to do something that would enable them to better balance their work and the children they planned to have.

They came across a nougat product and decided they could do it much better.

“I thought this is a good idea, I would not mind having a go at this,” he said.

He admits they did little market research, acting on intuition.

“I just thought I could do a product that was a bit better level than what I saw,” he said.

He developed a recipe that happened to be gluten free and dairy free, which turned out to be good marketing points for the product.

One disadvantage of their product is that it is not shelf stable.

“We did not want to change the recipe to make it more commercial,” he said.

It means it needs to be kept refrigerated, which limits the options for stockists.

But, he said, they were not prepared to compromise on the sweet, nutty texture.

Later, he saw a machine that was producing a burger-type product.

Mr Ueckerman said he thought the machine could be used to produce falafels.

“We developed something we thought would work with the machine,” he said.

The idea was for the falafel to be appetising, not too overpowering and not too bland.



On the rise: Glen Ueckerman doesn't mind being an early riser. Picture: DARRYL GREGORY

“We wanted to meet the middle of the market.”

Mr Ueckerman said through their farmers' market contacts they were able to source fresh local ingredients such as chickpeas, honey, eggs and parsley.

Along the way, the couple coined the name Larderfresh for what they hope will be a growing range of good quality food products.

He said the falafel was a gluten and dairy free and vegetarian option which meant it was attractive to retail, food service and farmers market customers.

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— Glen Ueckerman

With plans for more products, he said they did not feel the need to develop a business plan when they launched Larderfresh.

He said two bean-based product lines would be added in coming weeks.

“We would like to be able to have a range that fits into our gluten free, ready-to-eat format.”

Mr Ueckerman said that his close ties with distributors had unlocked markets for the products.

The couple employ casuals to help in the processing side of the business.

In addition to word-of-mouth advertising, the couple have just relaunched their website this week, complete with recipe suggestions.

Net links: www.larderfresh.com.au
www.vicfarmersmarkets.org.au