

# BAKING

BUSINESS



HAND PICKED

**John Reminis**  
IS BAKING  
HISTORY

MASTERCLASS

**PANDORO**

**Sprout  
Artisan  
Bakery**

THE  
SWEETEST  
THING



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# Bringing the taste of home TO A NEW AUDIENCE

NEVILLE STEEL HAS BEEN BRINGING TRADITIONAL AUSTRALIAN BAKERY GOODS TO US CONSUMERS FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS AS ONE HALF OF THE TEAM BEHIND AUSTRALIAN BAKERY CAFÉ.



Neville Steel

I'M A THIRD-GENERATION MASTER BAKER. MY FATHER, GRAEME STEEL, AND MY UNCLE, JACK GOOK, WERE BOTH BAKERS

For more than two decades Australian Bakery Café has been bringing high quality Australian bakery items to US consumers. At its helm is master baker Neville Steel, who originally hailed from Berriwillock in north-west Victoria.

Neville opened the doors to the bakery, based in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2001 with long-time friend and fellow baker Mark Allen, and the business found almost immediate success.

Neville credits this partly to the largely untapped US market in addition to the work he and Mark did prior to launching Australian Bakery Café, which saw the duo set up satellite stores in East Atlanta and Cumming in addition to running offsite festival catering and building up a strong mail order business.

"Over the years we've also worked with restaurants, embassies, football clubs, and Australian groups across the country," Neville said.

"It's been a wonderful experience serving the locals in Marietta, meeting Aussies passing through and connecting with expats looking for a taste of home.

"The US is a huge, largely untapped market. Americans love the pies, but they don't traditionally eat them the way Aussies do. That's been part of the fun—introducing them to a new food culture."

If we go right back to the beginning, Mark and Neville's partnership was first formed in the country town of Boort in Victoria, where the duo were born in the same hospital just three weeks apart.

Their friendship remained strong until their early teens, when Neville's father sold their bakery and moved the family to Berriwillock in the state's north-west.

"I'm a third generation master baker. My father, Graeme Steel, and my uncle, Jack Gook, were both bakers," Neville said.

"My earliest memories are from Uncle Jack's bakery when I was about seven—helping with jam tarts, shortbread and watching the pies and sticky buns come out of the oven.

"By 13, I knew baking was my future. I apprenticed under my father, who had himself learned the trade from Uncle Jack. The daily structure was already in place and I grew up in the rhythm of hot cross buns at Easter and meat pies during football season."

As fate would have it, Mark had also begun an apprenticeship at the Boort Bakery. Mark and Neville's apprenticeships lined up and they reconnected at William Angliss Food College in Melbourne. Both friends and rivals, Mark and Neville were eventually ranked as the number 1 and 2 apprentices in the state.

By 1991, Neville and Mark, along with Mark's wife Wendy, opened their first business venture together—the Chevy Rock Café in Bendigo.

"We sold it later that same year. Mark then moved to the US in 1992 and opened a wholesale bakery in Marietta mainly to serve the influx of visitors during the Olympics," Neville said.

"After that closed I travelled to the US in 1999 to explore opportunities. We decided to open a retail store in Marietta Square; a location with good foot traffic and a strong expat community. From the beginning we built the business to serve both locals and mail order customers across the country."

Twenty-four years down the track and Mark has since retired from Australian Bakery Café, but Neville remains in the kitchen to this day, where he makes many of the same products that were on the initial menu.

Neville said the entire range had been enthusiastically received right from the very start.

"Nearly all the flavours we launched with are still on the menu 24 years late. At first we thought we might have to rotate flavours, but every single one sold well," he said.

"Breakfast has always been big for us—omelettes, French toast, and pies like egg and bacon or spinach and feta. For lunch meat pies are the

stars, with customer favourites like steak and cheese, steak and bacon, and steak, cheese and onion, which Americans often compare to a Philly cheesesteak pie."

Although Australian Bakery Café's popularity hasn't diminished, Neville said it was through TV shows like *Bluey* that their product range was being introduced to a whole new generation.

"Shows like *Bluey* have had a massive impact. All the little kids know and love it, and it's helped introduce Aussie culture to a new generation," Neville said.

"For us that's meant more interest in all things Australian—food included." ✕