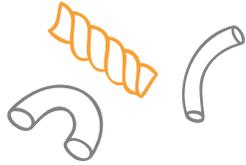


Spaghetti

JUNCTION



Local food chain Pastacup is scotching the myth that all fast food is junk - here you'll find pastas of all shapes and sauces of all hues, all made by hand, with love.

By GABI MILLS. Images by CRIB CREATIVE.

YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD the ads on the radio - Pastacup, where everything except the cups is made by hand.

It's worth remembering that key message when you pull up a chair in your nearest outlet (and chances are there is one near you, as the company grows a-pace with soon to be 20 restaurants open).

You won't find packet sauces or dog-eared months-old penne on offer here - all the pasta is freshly made using 100% durum wheat and eggs, the old fashioned way, and the sauces are meticulously put together following traditional, tried and tested authentic recipes.

It's all very smart and very simple - and the brainchild of Stuart Bernstein and his Norwegian partner Siri Solumsmoen. Catching up with the pair and two of their kids - they've just had their third child a couple of months ago - in the Morley store, it's hard not to be impressed with the drive of a pair of entrepreneurs who are determined to make Pastacup a real player in the fast food landscape here in WA and beyond.

"The idea started as a concept over a couple of beers in Sydney," explains Siri.



The pair met in there and, over those frothies, realised that there wasn't a pasta takeaway chain that they could think of.

After running cafes and restaurants over the past 25 years (including the popular



KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

Above, Partners Stuart Bernstein and Siri Solumsmoen are the brains behind the expanding chain, Pastacup. Left, some of the fresh hand-made pasta on offer.

North Perth cafe Poppies) Stuart spotted a gap in the market and began to think big.

"That was in 2007," says Siri. "I went back to Norway but soon realised I wanted to be with Stuart so came back to Australia and with him, started Italy Home Made, a precursor to Pastacup in the premises next door to Poppies."

It was a huge success but people struggled with the name, so after a bit of brainstorming, Pastacup was born.

"We sourced the Italian pasta-



making equipment and then spent hours and hours testing recipes – we just knew we were onto something,” says Stuart.

Finding the right type of takeaway cup was the next task – an important part of the chain’s convenience factor – and then it was a matter of educating customers that pasta could be a lunch item as well as a standard dinner option.

“We designed the business to be franchisable from the start, creating a systemised way of producing each type of pasta, each type of sauce, and how to fit out the store.”

This means that whether you choose fusilli with the cutely named Angry Sausage sauce (tomatoes, Italian sausage, capsicum, olives and chilli) in Currabine or cannelloni with spinach and ricotta in Busselton, it’ll taste the same. Consistency is, after all, the standard by which successful fast food outlets live or die.

Interestingly however, their franchisees are not generally chefs.

“That’s by design,” says Stuart. “We’ve found that franchisees with a cheffing background tend to want to fiddle with the



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recipes. We’re keen to keep them as they are throughout the chain. It makes it easier from a quality control point of view too.”

Visit one of the stores and you’ll find a comforting, earthy vibe, with each type of pasta displayed in rustic boxes in front of the kitchen. The cooks ‘grow’ the pasta before your eyes, using those expensive Italian pasta-making machines, while making sauces to order.

It’s a simple process – choose your pasta, choose your sauce and choose the size of cup you’d like to take it away in. Sauces fall into the ‘Tomatoey’, ‘Creamy’ and ‘Bit of Both’ categories – I loved the aforementioned Angry Sausage and also carbonara which certainly was not scrambled eggs and bacon.

There are other combos and dishes to choose from including risottos, a killer parmigiana and lasagna just like Nonna makes.

Even if you can’t find a sauce which tickles your fancy, it’s possible to ask for something bespoke – everything’s made to order after all which also means there’s very little waste, says Stuart.

fusilli – cream, pumpkin, chicken and parsley served on plump little pasta spirals.

“That’s my go-to order,” she says. “We find that the pasta shapes all have different personalities, that they hold the sauces differently. It’s great too for customers to watch the theatre of their creation and cooking – they can see that it really is all

hand made.”

It’s a great spot too for vegetarians to feel welcome – many of the sauces are veggie and again thanks to the flexibility of putting together your own sauce variations, if you’ve got a fussy child or friend in tow, there’s bound to be some combination of flavours from the 22 options which will hit the spot.

With plans to expand the business further into WA (stores in Baldivis, Eton and South Hedland are on the cards) and beyond to the rest of Australia and even internationally, the creative couple have lots on their plate currently. One thing, however, will always remain the same.

“We believe the future is made by hand,” says Siri.

A refreshingly old-fashioned view of the march of progress from a business with a classic favourite at its heart. **PL**



WIN
a \$100 voucher for dinner at a Pastacup of your choice. Visit **PRIMO**Life's Facebook page or primolife.com.au for details.
f Good luck!



“We had one regular who would always come in and ask for tomatoes, cream and chicken which we’d make for her. In the end we thought we might as well add it to the menu, and name it after her.”

So if you find yourself ordering a serve of Bonny on your papardelle that’s why the sauce is so named.

Siri’s own favourite is the Halloween

