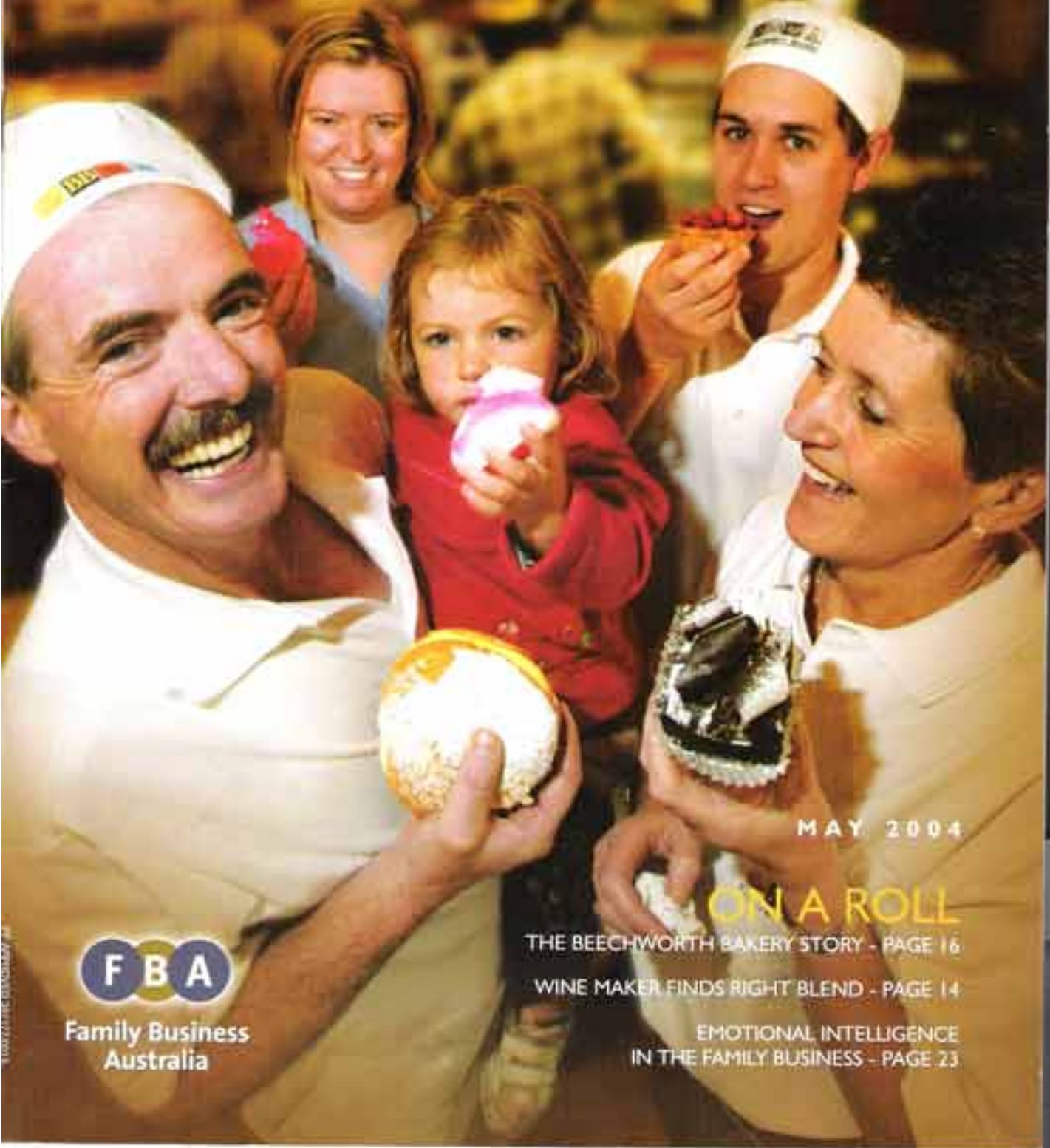


GENERATIONS

FAMILY BUSINESS AUSTRALIA MAGAZINE



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Family Business
Australia

'If you wouldn't BUY IT, DON'T SELL IT!'

Tom O'Toole tells NICK MOUNTSTEPHEN how he has grown the Beechworth Bakery into Australia's largest stand alone bakery.

BEECHWORTH baker, Tom O'Toole, shoots from the hip and is constantly on the move. So much so that he has made himself virtually redundant in the bakery he founded 20 years ago.

He spends more time now on the speaker circuit than anywhere near his bakery. People come from all over the world to find out how he has made country baking a bonanza.

Call him charismatic, inspirational or just plain energetic. Tom's 'secret' is that he has forged an 'attitude' within his business that is infectious and has empowered his staff to make decisions for themselves.

Tom left school at 14, held down some knockabout jobs, and decided on baking more than 20 years ago. His bakery at Beechworth and his sister at Echuca, 200 kms away to the west on the Murray, has sales of \$5 million and has become the highest earning single retail bakery in Australia and multi winner of tourism and business awards.

Today Tom's daughter, Sharon, 26, her husband Adam, son Peter, 16, and Tom's wife Christine all work in the business.

'I do not hold down any management role. It is all left up to the staff,' Tom said.

In 1857 the Beechworth Bakery's original building was erected as a single storey commercial premises, with a second storey and bakery added around 1900. Old legal documents reveal the premises have been home to a shoe shop, dining room and pastry shop. In 1974 Tom O'Toole purchased the property then known as the local Cafe & Milk Bar. Three years later, Tom sold the business and moved to Augusta in Western Australia, where he made his mark as a leading country baker.

'Don't lie' he tells them. 'Freshness is freshness' and anything less is no good.



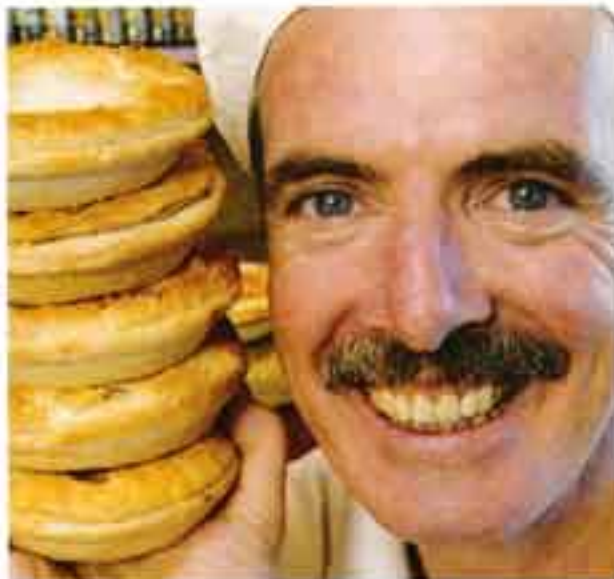


After returning to North East Victoria in 1984, Tom re-purchased his old Beechworth premises and the shops next door and a frenzy of major building and renovations began. Production and baking areas at the rear were extended, and the former drapery premises opened up into the existing shop, doubling the floor space and entrances for customers.

An outdoor area on the sidewalk was created to extend seating. In 1992, the second storey and balcony were opened to the public and a BYO liquor licence granted for these areas.

In July 2001, Tom and Christine O'Toole formed a new owner-management team and recruited two of their staff to become partners, Marty Mitazoni and Simon Bedbrook.

This new team took to Echuca in September 2001 and opened the new Beechworth Bakery Echuca, which is already proving to be a great tourist attraction.



The plan now is to have 20 Beechworth Bakeries operating right across Australia in selected tourist locations by 2015, offering great opportunities to the existing staff and newcomers who share the passion for success and growth.

"We have to be passionate in everything we say and do. I can't bear to be around people who are bland or bored. There's a breed of brain dead, gum-chewing assistants in so many shops. I want our people to feel excitement about our culture and our product!"



"Our Bakery is a 100 percent Australian owned family retail business located in one of Victoria's most historic tourist towns," Tom said.

"Our philosophy and business practice is quite simple: people should never mix 'simple' with 'effort'."

"More than 250 varieties of pies, cakes and pastries are baked fresh daily and we offer an attractive range of 'take home' souvenirs, suitable for all ages."

More than 100 staff are employed at the two bakeries, who undergo regular training in new production techniques, customer service and presentation. Many bakers from around Australia and overseas visit the bakery during the year.

Some of Tom's words for life:

- > Don't let someone else steal your day
- > Get out of your comfort zone and into it!
- > If it's to be, it's up to me
- > If you wouldn't buy it, then don't sell it
- > Attitudes are contagious. **OOO**