

AUSTRALIAN

business baking

The
sweetest
thing

**Gluten free
product**

**Rising against
the flood**

**European
competition
reports**



FEB/MAR 2011



The sweetest thing

Baking Business talks to Chimmy's head pastry chef, Laetitia Bremaud about managing Victoria's best bakery.

The rain pelts down outside Richmond-based Chimmy's Café, Bakery & Restaurant in January. The rainy, sticky and humid summer is interfering with the dough production, but French-born head pastry chef, Laetitia Bremaud is used to working with the Australian weather.

"We put the air-con on and the bakery is open, and we try to work early morning when the oven is on and try our best to work with it," Laetitia told *Baking Business*.

Working with butter in hot and humid conditions can be difficult, but the 28-year-old head pastry chef takes it as a challenge.

"It's a bit of fun, a bit different," she says.

Voted by the *Melbourne Leader* newspaper as the 'Local Favourite' three years running, Chimmy's was named Victoria's Best Bakery by the Baking Industry Association of Victoria in 2010. It was also named Bakery/Patisserie winner in the I Love Food competition, the official certificate displayed on a central column alongside numerous other awards.

In January, Laetitia qualified for one of six places with the Australian World Pastry Cup team, which is aiming to qualify at the Asian Pastry Cup and compete in Europe in 2013.

"I'm so glad. The adventure promises to be full of training, learning and practice. It will feel good and strange to... represent Australia (in competition). I will give all I've got to go all the way and represent Australia as it should," she says.

Inside Chimmy's a picture of the Eiffel Tower hangs against the brown brick wall, hinting at a French theme, but Laetitia stresses that Chimmy's isn't a 'French' bakery and carries a wide range.

"We sell large and small cakes. We've got 30 different slices, it's quite a big range for the shop. Sometimes you go to a pastry shop and they've only got five or six different cakes, but

A picture of the Eiffel Tower hangs against the brown brick wall, hinting at Chimmy's French theme, but Laetitia stresses that Chimmy's isn't a 'French' bakery and carries a wide range.

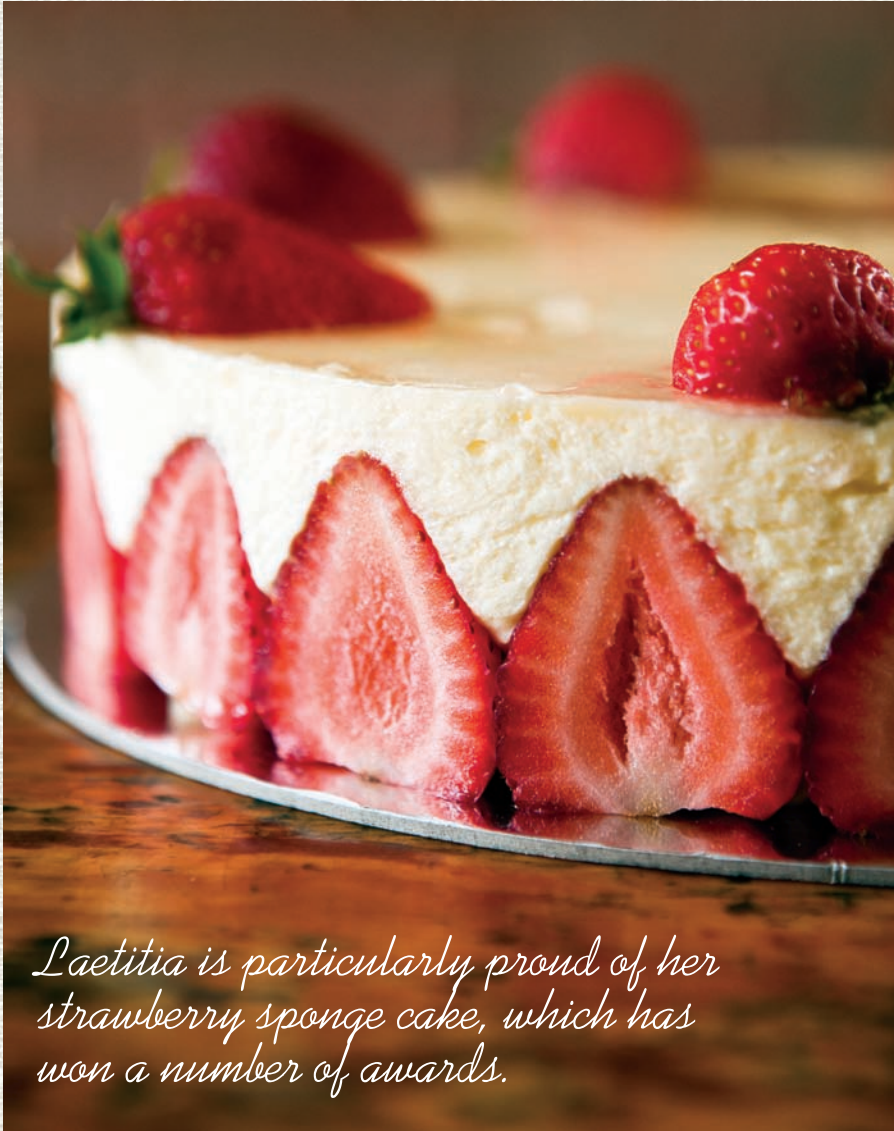
we've got a full range," she says.

Chimmy's was bought by new owners in 2009 from the Convent Bakery - another local institution. Laetitia has worked with the company for six years and can identify a few reasons why Chimmy's was named Victoria's best.

"We have a big range of product. We also (have) a dinner restaurant and we do a lot of catering. We also work a lot with the community around Richmond and Melbourne and in the past years we have been winning a lot of awards from the baking competitions, so maybe the baking association was thinking, 'Oh what's that bakery about?'. Because the competition is usually (entered by) Victorian countryside... There's not many Melbourne-based bakeries. So they thought, let's have a look at that bakery," she says.

Laetitia says the competition involved a mystery shop evaluation as well as a written submission about the business.





Laetitia is particularly proud of her strawberry sponge cake, which has won a number of awards.

While Chimmy's is French-themed, Laetitia says she has to be careful about what product she offers to Australian customers.

"Because we're not a French bakery, you can't do a French 'fine thing' and raise the prices very high - people won't understand. So we still have to do all this style and put the French twist into it without making it expensive, and check the cost and see how much we have to sell it for to make it reasonable."

According to Laetitia, the new owners have brought new ideas to Chimmy's, including the introduction of a restaurant dinner from Tuesday to Saturday night. They are debating whether to stay open 24 hours. A lack of space in Chimmy's means that Convent Bakery bakes their bread, but in a few years time they might start producing their own.

Laetitia is particularly proud of her strawberry sponge cake, which has won a number of awards.

"It has a French twist. It's not like a sponge cut

in half with fresh cream and strawberries, it's more like a mouslem cream, butter and custard cream, whipped together with some kirsch.

Layers of sponges, strawberry compote... and fresh strawberry inside and on the outside so it's more appealing than just having the sponges covered with cream," she says.

"So customers think, how did they do that?" she laughs.

"We always try to make it appealing and get good feedback from customers. We've got the locals and they come here often and they tell us what they think of the product or they give them samples to see what their feedback is."

Laetitia manages a mix of staff nationalities, including Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Indian, Sri Lankan and French pastry chefs.

"It's very international and we get along very well because we all have different skills with pastry and are quite a young team. (It's) mainly girls, (just) three boys - the rest is like five girls,

so it's girl dominance," she says with a laugh.

"As a girl I like to work with girls because they are very meticulous and can do small jobs and are very clean. My boys they do more work on the dough-break and heavy strong things - and I make the girls do the smaller jobs."

Laetitia prefers to train staff new to the industry so she can instill them with her own system.

"If someone has already been trained they've already got their own way of doing (things) and sometimes it doesn't work well because they have to work again and they don't want to do (things our) way. I teach them from the beginning so they know my standards and what I want and what the customer expects," she says.

Laetitia does all the costings, weights, spending, wastage and maintaining the freshness of the product, which she says makes her more valuable to the owners.

"That's important, if you want to be in charge of a pastry shop. You have to watch what you do. If you don't know the numbers it's hard to manage it or manage it well. And I think that's what my boss likes about me, I don't just work, I search for (the) best prices around... most days, prices are going up so you need to be careful of wastage, storage and those kinds of things."

Laetitia connects the industry to a wider audience by teaching pastry skills to others.

"I'm going to start teaching at Chimmy's because people have been asking for it. I would love one day to open my (own) school because I have a lot of people coming to me saying, 'I want to learn', so we are going to do it."

Having customers in the store baking will allow them see what happens behind the scenes, hopefully attracting new customers.

Laetitia would also like to one day open her own business, but for now she is happy to manage Chimmy's and continue to improve



