

Golden North scoops food industry awards

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LICKED THE OPPOSITION: Golden North brand manager Ivy Lee and marketing and export manager Trevor Pomery. Picture: KERYN STEVENS



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SIX years ago a band of fiercely determined food lovers was the only thing that stopped Laura ice cream company Golden North from going out of business.

Since then the group of five families has rescued the company and is building it rapidly into a powerhouse of the national ice cream industry.

The families were rewarded for their dedication last night when Golden North was voted by consumers as their favourite food brand at the 18th South Australian Food Industry Awards.

The company's position as an industry leader was further confirmed when the business became only the 12th inductee into the South Australian food industry's San Remo Hall of Fame.

Golden North general manager Peter Adamo said the company really appreciated the strong support from South Australian consumers.

"We have a very strong following in South Australia because we make our ice cream the old-fashioned way with fresh milk and fresh cream," Mr Adamo said.

"Business was extremely tough in our early days, but we have succeeded by moving from a contract packing plant to a premium branded ice cream company and by building national and international sales."

Overseas sales are led by growing shipments to China including the airfreighting of 4000 litres of fresh milk each week. Mr Adamo said the company employs 70 people and has grown from annual sales of \$9 million when it took over to more than \$25 million now. Its rapid diversification into new products based on a strong innovation program includes a joint branding exercise with Foodland in an ice cream pudding this Christmas and contract packing for Poh Ling Yeow's Jam Face label.

"We're succeeding by continuing to focus on strengthening our brand, through the development of new products and by increasing sales to the east coast and overseas," Mr Adamo said.

"It is a very seasonal business so if we can expand our export business that will help our winter production."

As the company approaches its 100-year anniversary in 2023, Mr Adamo said he is optimistic that it can double its sales in future, help build employment, use more dairy products and help sustain the town of Laura.

Food SA chief executive Catherine Sayer said the South Australian Food Industry Awards Program represents an important opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of SA's largest and fastest-growing industry sector.

Food SA president Ray Borda won the Bickford's Australia Leader Award for his efforts in establishing and guiding the growth of the Australian kangaroo meat industry.

Cheesemaker Kris Lloyd won the Duncan MacGillivray Entrepreneur Award for her efforts including founding the South Australian Cheesemakers Association and the CheeseFest Cheese Festival.

This year's winners included some remarkable small businesses such as Natural Fractions, winner of two innovation awards for its high efficiency fractionation system to produce pure essences.

Bultarra Australian Saltbush Lamb also collected two awards, the Primary Industries and Regions SA Regional Award and the Visy Export Award for businesses with 15 employees or less.

It was recognised for its stellar business growth supplying certified organic saltbush lamb around the world.

Northern Adelaide business Sunfresh Salads was also a multiple winner, collecting awards for innovation, and the coveted Foodland SA new product award for its Down To Earth warm salad pot range.

The family-owned and operated meat producer Wakefield Grange won the Thomas Foods International Primary Producer Award and the Peats Soil and Garden Supplies Sustainability Award for businesses with 15 or fewer employees.

Other winners included: MOO Premium Foods, Agri-Exchange, Pangkarra Foods, Fleurieu Milk Company, AlmondCo, Spring Gully Foods, B.-d. Farm Paris Creek, Galipo Foods and 2XE.

"SA's food and beverage businesses are a shining example of the dedication and determination small and medium business enterprises make to the economic future of this state every day," Ms Sayer said.