

GoodFood

Wild women of food: The suppliers, teachers, chefs, growers and brewers breaking the mould

- **BESHA RODELL**
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Kris Lloyd

Woodside Cheese Wrights, **South Australia**



Kris Lloyd never intended to make cheese. In fact, she never intended to work in the family business at all, having a satisfying career in marketing and corporate development. But eventually, around the time that she was having children, she came to work at the family winery.

The winery, Coriole in McLaren Vale, produced olive oil and vinegars along with wines, and Lloyd thought it would be a nice addition to the cellar door experience to add a seating area and sell antipasto platters. When Woodside, a neighbouring cheesemaking operation, came up for sale in 1994, she thought it was fitting that they produce their own cheese as well.

Woodside was a tiny operation, and one day there was simply no one else on hand to make the cheese, so Lloyd did it herself. "I was not really prepared for how I'd feel about that," she says. "I fell in love. One minute I had milk, and the next day I had cheese." This simple act of craft and chemistry began Lloyd on a journey to become a pioneer in Australian cheesemaking.

At the time, Lloyd admits, Woodside was making "really crappy cheese". But there was very little institutional knowledge in Australia and the few experts tended to keep their secrets to themselves. Eventually Lloyd founded a cheese association and organised cheesemaking workshops for South Australian producers. But that created its own issues. "We all learned from the same person," Lloyd said. "We all were using the same recipes. I realised that I didn't want to be a good cheesemaker, I wanted to be an extraordinary cheesemaker. I wanted to do things differently." So she began experimenting with her own cheeses. And she also travelled to Europe, learning everything she could from more experienced producers.

Lloyd's passion for doing things differently has resulted in a wholly original style of cheesemaking, one that has put her in the role of trailblazer. When she started adding fresh edible flowers to her cheeses, people thought she'd "gone mad", she says, and more than once she's had to work hard with regulators to get them to understand what she was trying to accomplish.

These days, Lloyd is obsessed with native ingredients, and how the use of them gives her cheeses a distinctly Australian personality. At the World Cheese Awards, a chevre covered in native green ants came in 11th place out of 3021 entries. When thinking about what to enter, Lloyd says she went with something unique rather than something expected. "We could enter a brie or camembert, but why would we do that? The French have been making those cheeses for thousands of years. I wanted to show something new in cheese."