

National award for cheese maker



Kym Masters and his wife Joanne started producing premium artisan Cheeses in Woodside eight years ago, they have now been recognised for a national producers award.

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A Woodside artisan cheese company has been nationally recognised at the 2023 Produce Awards hosted by *delicious.* magazine, winning the From the Dairy trophy.

The awards aim to recognise the best of Australian producers who supply to chefs and hospitality venues, whether the product is from the earth, paddock, sea or dairy, decided by a national judging panel which included some of Australia's most renowned chefs.

Kym Masters and his wife Joanne started their "passion project", Section28, eight years ago because they loved how cheese could capture the essence of place.

Their goal was to capture the essence of the Hills.

"We decided that the factory had to be close to the dairy and we chose the Hills because it's such a fresh, clean environment," Mr Masters said.

"And that shows through in our cheeses."

Making award-winning cheese was a gradual process according to Mr Masters, who travelled to premium cheese-making regions around the world, looking for inspiration.

When Section28 was founded, the process of making the Monforte Reserve – a raw milk, semi-hard cheese that won the From the Dairy trophy – was far from refined.

"I think about those first cheeses I made eight years ago and I'm horrified that I thought they were okay, so I think we continue to learn every day where we're making little minor adjustments and tweaks," Mr Masters said.

Although Mr Masters thinks he is "probably 85% of the way there" when it comes to making the perfect cheese, he believes there are three main components to the success he has had so far.

"One is passion, you can taste the passion in that and it's the passion of myself, Jo and the team," he said.

"The second thing is it's got great raw ingredients – we have excellent milk supplied and that shows through.

"We use techniques that are European, which are really respectful of the process and the ingredients – I think all of those three combined shine through in an outstanding aged cheese, particularly in the Monforte."

Mr Masters said it was a "really nice feeling" to be recognised with the award, particularly given chefs are Section28's principal customer base.

"To have chefs vote and say (that) what we're doing is great, is really amazing," he said.

"It's makes those tougher days a lot more enjoyable."