

Entrepreneur of the Year



Photo: Fiona Morris

# One way to earn a crust

This Iowa-born Australian adapted large-scale pie production for smaller businesses, creating a winning business model.

A SUCCESSFUL entrepreneur is someone who has a great idea and the drive and determination to turn that into a successful business.

Thomas Lindsay (pictured) has done just that. The US-born businessman has taken the Australian concept of the humble pie and sold it around the world, even beating the Aussies at their own game.

He is the founder of Lindsay Pie-Making Equipment, a company he started more by accident than design, a quarter of a century ago. "A friend of mine in New Zealand showed me a meat pie. He thought we could form a company that made machines that could make these pies. As it ended up, after we had the company up and running I saw the potential and bought him out."

Pie-making machines weren't a new concept but Lindsay's innovation was to adapt the giant machines that were being used around the world, to suit smaller businesses in Australia and New Zealand.

"Basically what our machines do is exactly what you would do manually on

a benchtop in a kitchen," Lindsay says. "There were all these big machines around when I started and what we did was even up the playing field a little, selling machines to small- and medium-sized bakeries. I am now selling second and third generation machines to the same people who I originally did business with."

His hands-on approach to everything in the company has seen it grow to be one of the biggest in the industry, even selling to multinationals, such as Sara Lee.

"I had an electrical background, but basically I learned everything, from selling and marketing, designing, pneumatics and engineering from reading a lot," Lindsay says. "I do most of the designing, but I nut it out with my people. I always say that when you are designing and developing it is important to remember what you don't want in the final product."

"To make something complicated can only take a few minutes, to make something simple requires a lot of thought."

Over the past 23 years, Lindsay says the

pie-making business has evolved and it has been his company's ability to keep up with those changes that has seen it continue to grow. "Pie makers and pie eaters are now a bit more discerning," he says.

"I like the new ethnic influences in pies, and we have had to accommodate our pie-making machines to keep up with those."

"The biggest change in the industry has been the rise of the gourmet pie. Nineteen years ago when I was one of the founding sponsors of the Great Australian Meat Pie competition, if you found a veggie in a pie, you were kicked out of the competition."

"But the goalposts have changed. Now we have everything from smoked fish, to beef and burgundy, chicken teriyaki, buffalo and emu. If someone had told me 25 years ago that in 10 years time I would be in Australia selling pie-making machines, and then taking that concept back to the US, I would never have thought it was possible."

"I am just a boy who grew up in Iowa, fell in love with a New Zealand girl and it snowballed from there."

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