

Dino at the Coffee Max store in Camberwell. Daniele Curto Photographer.

THE X FACTOR IN COFFEE PRODUCTION

From Coffex Coffee to Coffee Max, the Crivelli Family has doubled its success in the Australian coffee industry.



Coffee is a peculiar hallmark of being Italian. A habit, a real ritual that gives the opportunity to socialize, have a chat in lightness, nice break at work and in free time.

A tradition so ingrained is to be a true icon of Italian lifestyle.

Thousands of Italians each year arrive in Australia and crowd the many cafés of Melbourne confirming that the first thing Italians seek once abroad is the steaming aroma of an Italian espresso.

Dino Crivelli is a third-generation coffee roaster and his family from Sant'Eufemia, Pescara in Abruzzo came to Australia in 1952 looking for a better quality of life.

"My grandfather Antonio moved to Melbourne first to test the waters and then a year later my father Domenico and my grandmother followed", Dino says.

Like many Italian immigrants in Australia his father and subsequently

his father Domenico clung to their own art of getting by and reinventing themselves.

Dino's nonno became one of the first pioneers in the coffee industry in Australia. "Soon my nonno realized there was a shortage of quality coffee and he thought there was a market and an opportunity for him to start blending and roasting coffee."

They must have looked like adventurous entrepreneurs. "Initially, in fact, they started roasting a small amount of coffee trying a few different blends and coffee and putting it all together until they created a nice and unique flavor."

The business expanded very quickly and in 1959, after only seven years of residence in Australia, the Crivelli family established the renowned Coffex Coffee and sold their coffee in the family retail shop on Moreland Road, Coburg.

But this was only the beginning. The demand for good coffee was at its early stages but the growth was very fast; in a matter of years they started supplying other cafes', bars, offices and business, making Coffex Coffee along with Genovese Coffee, Mocopan Coffee, Di Mattina Coffee, Grinders Coffee, one of the best well know coffee brand on the market.

The passion and love that Dino's family profused in developing their brand of coffee, the spirit of friendship they promoted in the Italian community and their willingness to help other cafés to grow their business by supplying them a great product, is something that still moves Dino and makes him proud of his name.

"Back at that time", Dino remarks "there was only a handful of coffee manufactures or roasters and Coffex Coffee turned into a such a thriving company that it got to the stage where it could import and export coffee interstate and



Domenico cupping different varieties of coffee.

overseas.”

Dino’s father along with his grandfather continued the business right up until 1995 when they sold the Coffex Coffee business and the brand.

Although he was not more than a kid Dino has very sharp memories of his father and during the glorious years of Coffex Coffee. “Cupping different varieties of coffee with my father is a paramount of my childhood memories. By the end of it I’d be overwritten. We’d cup coffee for a good hour and the caffeine was running incessantly through my veins, and I remember him saying: ‘This is good for you Dino.’”

With caffeine flowing in his circulatory system Dino in 2000 picked up the baton of nonno Antonio e papa’ Domenico and started Coffee Max, “There was nothing else I wanted to do rather than stay in the coffee industry”, he admits.

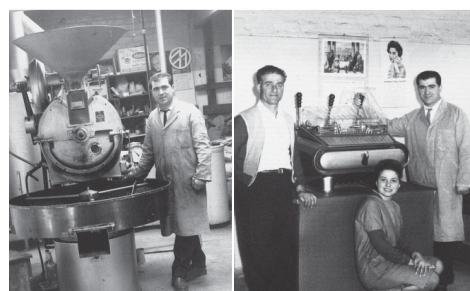
Coffee Max differently from Coffex Coffee is not a mass producer but an artisan, boutique roaster.

“To some degree I follow in the footsteps and philosophy of my predecessors. What I learned from my papa’ and my nonno is to work hard with honesty and integrity. But the coffee industry is changing; we have to move with the times. Nowadays there are a big variety of single origin coffees available. The consumer likes to explore different types of coffees. Coffee is becoming a lot more scrutinized, the consumers are more focused on where the coffee is sourced, what farm it comes from, is it AA-grade or a AB-grade? They want to know what is in that particular coffee blend.

The types of coffees we experience now are a lot greater than what was available back then.”

“There are also different methods of coffee making. The espresso machine is not anymore the undisputed protagonist, but there is also the cold drip method. The coffee is extracted with cold water and ice in a chamber, at the end of the process, which takes 12 hours. The water drips through the ground coffee. You can now drink your coffee, which is made with cold water as opposed to espresso coffee, which is produced with hot water. The outcome is a palatable coffee much lower in acidity”.

Coffee Max after 15 years from its first appearance is considered at the forefront of the coffee industry in Australia. The X factor in coffee production has succeeded again. With two outlets successfully launched Dino is planning on opening a specialty coffee house by the end of this year in which barista and roaster training will be introduced. Dino is very reluctant to provide more details on the third store, and I was not able to obtain a lot of information on this interesting project. However I am sure that in the near future we will hear a lot about how Coffee Max iterated its success once again.



ABOVE LEFT Domenico, Dino’s father.
 ABOVE RIGHT Nonno Antonio (on the left), papa’ Domenico (on the right) with a worker at the retail shop in Coburg.

