



Silver Tongue Foods

**MORE THAN JUST
A CRACKER**

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Photos by Karen Hughes Field

When it comes to crackers, not all things are created equal. Just ask Kristina Kucan and Andy Tolson of Silver Tongue Foods who have taken the humble cracker and elevated it to a whole new level!

Infused with flavour and created with love and a lineage of ancestral knowledge, and artisan techniques their crackers have become soul food, yearning to bring people together and be shared.

When you experience their food creations, which includes their naturally leavened sourdough cracker range, pickles, and jams, you can't help but feel good and smile, and there is plenty to smile about.

These delicious products are super clean, flavour divine and the real deal, where innovation and creativity meet basic wholesome ingredients.

You would think that Kristina and Andy were destined to have a food manufacturing business from birth. However the journey to becoming entrepreneurs and exceptional artisan makers is much more complex and is imbued with humble beginnings.

It is a story of migration, culture, loss, hard work, creativity, growth, entrepreneurship, and success.

Arriving in Wodonga at the tender age of 8 as a refugee, the trajectory of Kristina's life had forever changed.

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Forced to flee their beloved village in Croatia, her parents had promised her and her sister Koalas, Kangaroos and a better future in a place called Australia.

Growing up green and gold, presented many opportunities for Kristina and her family, however her connection to her birthplace and cultural roots of Croatia would remain strong.

Frequent trips back home to spend time with extended family were a constant source of inspiration for Kristina. These trips were about 'being steeped in culture, knowing where you came from and family bonding'.

The gatherings were always centred around a table of good food where important lessons were handed down from one generation to another: 'food should be created with love; food exists to bring people together and food always tastes better when shared.'

During one of these trips home, Kristina's uncle taught her the simple art of bread making.

From the age of 14 cultural cooking and experimenting with food became a soothing pass time for Kristina, it was a way for her to settle her mind and connect with her roots.

Over time she began forging a life of her own achieving a

university education and devoting many years to a jet-setting career in remote places delivering Workplace Health and Safety programs where she eventually met Andy Tolson.

Andy had also migrated to Australia at a very young age (5) and admits that transitioning from life in Canada to regional Australia took time.

Visiting remote livestock stations as a young boy, with his father slowly worked its magic and Andy became attune to the bush and fell in love with the rugged landscapes of Australia.



Like Kristina, the cultural influence of Andy's Ukraine, Canadian roots remained strong.

Andy speaks fondly of food memories of his grandmother and great grandmother. The making of perogies, the aroma of roasted meats, standing in a lush garden shelling peas, eating sweet smelling earth covered carrots and picking raspberries until his fingers bled.

It is safe to say that for these two remarkable individuals the appreciation of good food lives in their DNA which would end up being their saving grace.

When Covid-19 began its first world-wide wave in 2020, Kristina was given the heartbreaking news that she no longer had a job in the industry she had devoted her life to.

Like so many people, her identity and sense of purpose was connected to her work. After a day of overwhelming sadness that left Kristina grappling with the looming question 'what next?'

She opened the fridge and grabbed the 35-year-old family sourdough starter and brought it back to life and started baking.

Crazy baking... breads, crackers, pasta, croissants, scrolls, tarts, you name it, she made it.

Her life began to revolve around the dough, it literally began to dictate her movements.

She would rest while the dough rested, and wake when the dough would rise.

The sourdough gave Kristina new life, within the leaven there was purpose and she felt good. In between the stints of baking creativity took hold and she began to experiment with ferments, krauts, kombucha, and cider vinegars.



The output of delicious goodies became so overwhelming that she sent the extras to work with Andy for fellow employees and friends.

Within days, people were requesting specific baked goods and asking for a list of available products. Kristina went from a 1-kilo bag of flour to a 5-kilo bag and then a 25-kilo bag within the first three weeks.

By the end of the month, people from all over were asking how they could get their hands on Kristina's creations.

In a time when we all needed comfort, Kristina was cranking out the love infused culture food.

Food that brought people together even when we were meant to be apart.

A contactless exchange was created with her letter box and a fence post, and a steady stream of cars were coming to collect the cloth wrapped goodies.

The demand continued to increase, and Kristina met the demand by baking day and night.

Kristina decided it might be time to take the venture more seriously. Soon there was a logo, and a business plan, and Silver Tongue Foods was born.

Looking for feedback on the quality of her crackers, Kristina sent a simple text message to Helen and Sam, the owners of Cheese Therapy known for their delicious artisan cheese boxes.

They were more than happy to try Kristina's crackers but with fears of possible rejection, Kristina dropped off the samples and quickly drove away filled with feelings of uncertainty.



Before she could pull into her own driveway, Cheese Therapy had sent a response. They loved the crackers, Kristina and her story and placed an order of 200 of the organic Fleur Sourdough Crackers.

Two days later the order increased to 800 and within a week it had reached 1000.

After that, it was 'send us whatever you can bake!' This was just the beginning of a new journey for both Andy and Kristina.

It was all hands on the humble rolling pin, with friends lending oven space, rolling dough, and helping pack the boxes.

Within months sales reps were knocking on the door, as tastings and retail sales began to take off.

In December 2020 Andy quit his job at 3:30 p.m. on a Friday and by 4:30 p.m. was rolling dough and has continued to roll dough every single day since.

The demand for the crackers continued to increase with Cheese Therapy being their biggest clients and adding an additional 80 wholesale accounts.

The phone kept ringing with additional people wanting to get their hands on Silver Tongues beautiful foods.

In February of 2021 the pickles and preserves line was launched and the love for the flavour innovation and creativity continued to pour in.

By April of 2021 the wholesale accounts reached over 200 Australia wide.

Andy reminisces about the personal transformation that took place as he tried to keep up with the sheer demand of rolling dough.

The leaven was also breathing new life into Andy. As the dough would rise, he would focus on his own personal growth and spirituality and as the dough would rest the years .



of stress and emotional toxicity of high-pressured jobs slowly began to fall away.

Regardless of the success there were countless moments that the pair felt they could not go on due to exhaustion or exhaustion or feeling overwhelmed.

It was in these moments a random customer would send a message or make a statement about their food that was so genuine or kind, it would affirm their path and then carry them to the next steps in the business venture

When asked what they are most proud of, Kristina and Andy agree that it has been their ability to innovate such complex delicious flavours with such basic but high-quality ingredients.

They are also extremely proud of how clean their products are. Their entire line of foods are premium, organic, vegan friendly, and made without a single preservative.

They take great pride in the fact that their recipes are culturally infused, and their artisan techniques are linked to their heritage.

Their vision for Silver Tongue Foods is to expand and disrupt the cracker industry and contribute to a positive food culture.

'It's more than just a cracker' it truly is a soul food, yearning to bring people together and be shared.

You can find Silver Tongue Foods at selected stockists visit www.silvertonguefoods.com.au

***'Food brings people together; every culture has food stories, and they are so incredibly important.'* ~ Kristina Kucan**

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