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## Saluti to a cook who widened the course



Art of happiness ... Lucio Galletto in his Paddington restaurant that is a haven for artists.

Photo: *Sahlan Hayes*

David Dale  
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LUCIO GALLETTO came to Australia for love and stayed because he saw an opportunity. He was pleased and puzzled to be told he would be awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday honours list.

"Why would they give you a medal for doing something you love?" he asked his wife, Sally.

His customers at Lucio's restaurant in Paddington and the painters whose works cover its walls know the answer: he does it with dedication and generosity.

In the summer of 1975, Galletto was studying to become an architect and working part-time in his family's restaurant on the north-west coast of Italy. He arrived to start his shift one lunchtime and saw a beautiful blonde sitting in the bar. Sally Stanford, of Mudgee, was backpacking around Europe.

She spoke little Italian, he spoke little English, but they communicated well enough to run off to Paris and get married.

The pair arrived in Sydney in 1977. Galletto didn't trust his English to finish his architecture studies, but Sally convinced him he had a rarer talent. Growing up between the tables and the stoves of Capannina Ciccio restaurant, he had learnt how to make people happy.

He found that "posh food" in Sydney was French and most Italian restaurants seemed stuck with a menu built around spaghetti bolognese, scaloppine with mushrooms and lemon gelato.

"We spent most of our money eating out in the first few months I was here and I didn't like most of the Italian restaurants," he says. "I missed coffee very much.

"We didn't want to change the world, but we wanted to do good food, something different, and to have the pleasure of our own place. I realised it was my way of life. I never planned to work in the food business and I never consciously studied it, but in my blood was the growing and the cooking and the serving."

Opening first in Balmain in 1981, and moving to Paddington in 1983, Galletto introduced a standard of service and a style of cooking Australians had barely seen before.

The family restaurant, in the fishing village of Bocca di Magra, had always helped local artists - displaying their paintings and sculptures and feeding them for months, even years, until they became successful enough to pay for their meals.

Galletto followed that policy here and now finds his restaurant is often mistaken for an art gallery by tourists strolling through Paddington.

The official notification of his honour says: "For service to the community through contributions as a restaurateur and author, and to the support of arts organisations."

The painter Colin Lanceley adds: "Lucio has provided us with the most wonderful, warm familial place. In the world that we all inhabit, which is so political and problematic, we can walk in here and we feel at ease."

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