

PERSONALITY OF THE WEEK

Couple puts heart and soul into guesthouse

WHEN Italian cook Luciano “Luci” Chiusa arrived in South Africa on holiday 20 years ago, he fell in love with the country and decided to make this his permanent home.

The odds were stacked against him. At that time he could neither speak nor understand a word of English, and also had an ongoing battle to get his temporary work permit renewed during the first five years of his stay in the country.

But Chiusa is not a man to let obstacles stand in his way. With characteristic determination, he has since not only gained permanent resident status, but also wooed and wed his South African wife Jan Peachey, despite language difficulties. In addition, he opened and ran a Green Point delicatessen for several years, and recently moved on to manage the new, lux-



Impti du Toit

ury guesthouse he and Peachey have built in University Estate.

“His determination is one of the reasons I fell in love with him,” says Peachey. “When we first met, he was determined that he was going to stay in South Africa and that I was going to be his wife. He had it all planned, and felt that

all he had to do was to get through some obstacles and everything would eventually go right.”

This philosophy seems to have worked well in building Bella Italia, their guesthouse. As first-time owner-builders, constructing the beautifully appointed and very stylish five-bedroomed guesthouse was a task fraught with so many difficulties it might have sent many lesser couples running to the divorce courts.

Instead, the tenacity and positivity

Chiusa demonstrated during the work, which he project-managed full-time for two years, has strengthened the bond between them.

The couple admits it was scary to sell the home they previously owned, as well as Pasta Luciano, the delicatessen Chiusa had successfully built up, to risk everything in their new venture. But the guesthouse represented a dream to them both.

Coming from a big family which loved having parties and entertaining – the lifestyle that had so captivated Chiusa – Peachey had always dreamt of having a big house with beautiful views. And Chiusa, who had spent many years working as a specialist pasta chef, wanted a place where he could carry on preparing his authentic Italian food for guests, yet still have free time to enjoy family life.

Their dreams finally came to fruition last December with the opening of the guesthouse.

The couple has many innovative plans,

among them to run a small cookery school in their kitchen, where people can learn to make fresh pasta and a delicious sauce, and then sit down to enjoy the meal they’ve prepared with a glass of wine.

“Alternatively, guests who book to stay overnight can pay a dinner, bed and breakfast rate, and learn to make an Italian dish for their dinner, under Luci’s supervision, if they wish,” Peachey says.

They hope to make Bella Italia a “home-from-home” for visitors to Cape Town. They are happy to spend time chatting to guests who want company, making them feel part of the family, and even showing them around the city. But Peachey says they are also sensitive to guests’ needs, and will take their lead from people who prefer to be alone.

The couple has succeeded in their goal to the extent some guests have already returned for a second visit, although their doors have been open for just three months. And Peachey adds, with a smile,



Luciano Chiusa and his wife Jan Peachey have worked hard to achieve their dream

“Someone from Johannesburg did recently write in our guestbook that she regards our guesthouse as her ‘home from home’.”

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