



Vancouver's Bread and Cheese Shop

Ted Topping, Creative Insights, Vancouver.

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Pane e Formaggio is where tradition meets trend.

By Tuija Seipell

When you enter Pane e Formaggio Artisan Bread & Cheese Shop in Vancouver’s well-off Point Grey Village, you notice the Italian influences. Those who have visited the country and those whose heritage is Italian will recognize familiar products and design features, yet the store is not an “old European” shop.

Pane e Formaggio – “bread and cheese” in Italian – is chic, trendy, urban and fresh, but still manages to exude an authentic ambiance of time-tested quality, bygone times and Italian tradition.

This flashback to the past was one of the goals of company co-owner and proprietor David Nonni. Born in Vancouver to Italian parents, Nonni grew up frequenting the many old Italian delis, cafés and shops in East Vancouver with his parents.

“Others had peanut butter and jam sandwiches at school but my lunch would be provolone or mortadella, and everyone would stare,” remembers Nonni with a smile. “Now I take great pleasure when I see some of our customers’ kids coming in with their parents and actually asking for asiago. It is good to see they have been exposed to different tastes, although most of our clients aren’t foodies or have any Italian heritage.”

Voice of the Canadian Baking Industry

Introducing the products and experiences of his own childhood has allowed Nonni to create a genuine and unpretentious fusion of tradition and trend, and wrap it all up in a food-lover’s attention to quality, freshness and uniqueness.

Without doubt, Pane e Formaggio reflects Nonni’s personality. While cherishing traditions and his own Italian heritage, Nonni is a food enthusiast and has an exceptional nose for trends. Nonni’s 15-year stint as a manager and buyer for one of Vancouver’s leading high-end men’s fashion stores, Mark James, attests to his formidable sense of fashion and style.

Distressed marble, rich millwork, cast-iron furnishings and clean, rustic colours form a perfect background for the multitude of artisan breads, cheeses and other food items. Pane e Formaggio is a bakery, a deli, a grocery, a café and a lunch spot, but it is not everything for everybody.

“Everything has to belong,” says Nonni. “Rustic, Italian, raw, natural, clean, high-quality, nothing fussy – the décor matches the food and the food matches the décor. It is important to stay true to what you believe and use your instincts to select the right products. Our grocery area is very focused. I am open to new ideas and I seek them constantly, but I still always go back to



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Owner David Nonni with the Pane e Formaggio's merchandising and promotions manager Nadia Bruschetta and retail manager Michael Whynot. Nonni opened the wholesale and retail bread and cheese shop in 2001 and has since expanded to a second location.

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Pane e Formaggio as a company includes three components: two shops and one wholesale unit. The Point Grey store at West 10th Avenue in Vancouver and the wholesale bakery and commissary in East Vancouver opened their doors in the summer of 2001. In August 2002, Nonni opened the other store in West Vancouver's tiny Dundarave Village.

Both stores are about 1,300 square feet in size. The Point Grey store has 22 seats. This includes a few bar stools at the counter and a couple of tables outside. The Dundarave Village store has 28 seats inside and 16 on the outdoor patio.

The wholesale bakery and commissary is about 2,300 square feet. It serves not only Pane e Formaggio stores but also several other high end stores and cafés, and provides some catering as well. In addition to breads, cakes, pastries and other baked goods, the wholesale unit provides all of the deli items for the Pane e Formaggio shops, including soups, salads, sandwiches, pies, dips, spreads and pestos.

The main fare at the Pane e Formaggio stores is artisan breads and high-quality cheeses. Nonni sources the cheeses from suppliers of all sizes, including several artisan cheese makers on Vancouver Island, Saltspring Island, and elsewhere.

In addition to the bread and cheese, a strictly edited selection of deli items and grocery products is also offered. The shelves display oils, vinegars, crisps, crackers, spreads and other specialty food items that fit Nonni's and his team's parameters.

The company owners all have a genuine interest in the business. In addition to Nonni, the group includes his business partner Dave

Spalti, and head baker Paul Harwood and his wife Debbie.

The names of pastry chef Doug Wall, retail manager Michael Whynot, and merchandising and promotions manager Nadia Bruschetta also pop up frequently in Nonni's conversation as key players in the nearly 40-member staff group.

"When I started this, many people said that if you try to do both retail and wholesale, you will fail," says Nonni. "They also said that staffing would be the most difficult issue. We have succeeded in both. We have a caring, professional staff group that contributes ideas and embraces our philosophy. I always try to really listen to the staff. They do care and I do care."

While the two stores and wholesale unit have met with enviable success, Nonni has no illusions about being immune to mistakes. He says that opening a store in Whistler in 2002 was an error.

"We ran the store for only a year and realized it was not the right place for us," he says. "Because it is a resort town, the population is transient. We were busy four months of the year. Trucking items up to Whistler every day was a major logistical

problem. We wasted a lot of time, effort and money."

Nonnie is clear that he does not want to grow the business into a multi-store chain. He believes that the presence of the proprietor is as important to customers as it is to the staff and to the company's identity. However, he is currently looking at another location in a suitable Vancouver neighbourhood. If it comes through, another Pane e Formaggio will open its doors soon. And if all goes as usual, word-of-mouth will be the only advertising needed, and the proprietor will soon know many of his customers by name. ♦

Mission Statement

In the West 10th store, a blackboard on the wall bears this message:

We will continue to maintain and deliver the highest standards of customer service. We will provide our customers with products and services that are unique to Pane e Formaggio.

We will always look for the freshest, best quality ingredients and supplies.

We will consistently strive to be innovative and keep up with food trends.

**QUALITY MAKES THE DIFFERENCE.
WELCOME TO PANE E FORMAGGIO.**

Online: www.pane-e-formaggio.com