

An Italian fruit shop in Manly set in motion her life-long love affair with Italian culture.

Heritage Officer for the community organisation Co.As.It (Italian Association of Assistance), Linda Nellor, recalls memories of the family behind the store.

I just fell in love with the family, their lifestyle, their work ethic and the smells emanating from their kitchen. I was eight-years-old and it was such a different household to where I came from.

Suddenly I was in this place with this tantalizing language and amazing sense of family, working together. The kids would come back from school and take their turn to work in the shop. It left a very strong impression on me.

With her job being to promote Italian heritage, Linda says the upcoming exhibition, Sydney's Italian Fruit Shops . The Original Green Grocer, will be a moving experience.

These families and their small businesses have changed the way we live, the way we eat, the way we think about food. I don't think they realise how much they've done. They need to be honoured for what they've contributed to this country.

The exhibition is a collaboration between Co.As.It and UTS's Australian Centre for Public History, a hub of the Centre for Creative Practice and Cultural Economy. Director of the Centre, Paul Ashton, says the project has been nine years in the making.

We started with a request from Co.As.It to assist them in getting some research projects off the ground, and the fruit shop one fit in with some of our work.

We managed to get a small grant from the NSW Heritage Office, plus an Australian Technology Network Grant, which allowed us to undertake the detailed work of doing oral history interviews and collecting photographs.

The exhibition will feature photographs from a bygone era . when large supermarket chains didn't exist and the local fruit shop was today's Coles Express.

The fifteen panels of images include categories like A Family Affair, Women At Work and Never Too Young . dedicated to the Italian children who worked in the shops.

Also included is a panel on the famous De Lucas of King Street, arguably the best-known fruit shop in Sydney. Items such as the old cash register, scales, leather aprons, old fruit crates, books and journals will be on display as well.

A website www.sydneyitalianfruitshops is also available where people who have sent in material can enter a postcode, suburb or employee name and see a map with photographs and memories or their fruit shop.

Nellor hopes visitors will appreciate the impact of the Italian fruit shops on the Australian palette.

With that meeting at the fruit shop, there was a cross fertilisation with Anglos meeting Italians and learning from each other.

People were suddenly seeing new things and talking about it, and meat and three veg wasn't that exciting anymore.



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... an Italian fruit shop that touched your life; the smells,
... rm service.+

Sydney's Italian Fruit Shops . The Original Green Grocer will be on display at Customs House,
Circular Quay Sydney until the end of September 2010.

Next Venue: Leichhardt Library, Piazza Level Italian Forum 23 Norton Street, Leichhardt on show
from September 4th until 29th November 2010.

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