

Thanks to my Guardian Angel, I was appointed to the team.

After two years of training twice a week, we found ourselves in Germany, and as they say, “voilà” — five individual gold medals, three silver, and most importantly, Australia was placed second globally in the hot kitchen category. At the time, this was significant news in the industry; it even made page 14 in the daily newspaper with a 15-word paragraph, which required a magnifying glass to locate.

At the Culinary Olympics, it was touch-and-go over the five days, with us being narrowly beaten by the USA. Notably, the USA Team had a contingent of 60 supporting staff for their team of five chefs, among the 29 countries competing in the National Category. Notwithstanding:

- Their budget was rumoured to be more than half a million US dollars.
- Their support staff were mainly armed service personnel.
- They flew their equipment and team in a chartered 747.

We had a team of five chefs representing Australia:

- 80 thousand dollars from industry sponsors.
- Two apprentices and two support staff.
- Arrival by economy flight, thanks to Qantas.

However, with a ‘go-get’ attitude and a ‘let’s show them’ mindset, we persevered.

Significantly, only one of our team was born in Australia, but we were all proud to be Australian citizens.

The IKA/Culinary Olympics have been held every four years since 1990 (except during the war years) and are traditionally hosted in Germany. The event consistently attracts over 2,000 chefs competing in various categories from about 50-plus countries around the world, with over a hundred thousand visitors attending an associated food and equipment show.

A few years later, I found myself as the Head of the Hospitality School at Casey TAFE, during which I was fortunate to receive a Churchill Fellowship to explore Hospitality Education in the USA and Canada.

In 1993, a complete disaster struck my family when my first wife, Jean, was diagnosed with terminal melanoma. I immediately resigned from my job to care for her. During the eighties and early nineties, Jean also competed in subsequent Olympics and had an international reputation as a food artist, evidenced by one Olympics where she returned with more medals than the entire Australian team combined.

Losing someone is never easy, and it led me to a wilderness experience. If it weren’t for my three wonderful children, I would not be here today. Slowly regaining my courage and sanity, I attended a social club called “Friends Getting Together” and met Catherine. I discovered that one can love two people in the world at the same time. I married a lovely lady with three adorable children. We now have six high achievers who have blended beyond belief, and I love them all.

We opened a Foodie Bed and Breakfast. Catherine used her experience from previously running a B&B, and I contributed my culinary skills.

We actually received three Dandenong Ranges tourism awards and were twice runner-up finalists in the Victorian Tourism Awards. Renowned Victorian B&B owners were dismayed, but our success was due to a unique business model we had created and help from my Guardian Angel.