

# Carla's way

Debi Enker reports from the set of SBS' new crime drama, Carla Cametti PD

# A thick slice of life

Will Studd is on a mission to save cheese and the way of life it represents, writes **Paul Kalina**.

**S**EVERAL labels can be applied to Will Studd. Funnily, they all involve cheese. The French call him a maitre fromager, while a Queen Victoria Market deli refers to him as a cheese guru. According to a publication in America, he's a cheese rebel.

The first person to make a show about cheese, alongside Wallace and Gromit he's TV's most famous cheese aficionado.

He'll tell you that he's something of a cheese obsessive. "I think the Americans got it right, Will Studd the obsessional," he admits.

He has two books on the topic and 31 episodes of the TV series *Cheese Slices* under his belt. By day, he runs a thriving cheese importation business.

But the English-born Studd shows no signs of letting up on his singular mission to celebrate the customs, techniques and flavours of cheese and its making — century-old traditions that, as he sees it, are imperilled by industry, demographic changes, the economy and politics.

"Some of the stuff we're recording won't be there in two, three years," says Studd.

As we see in the first of the new episodes, there's only one farm left in England that makes traditional Lancashire. It's a similar case for many of the world's most celebrated cheeses.

"But at the same time,"

says Studd, "we're encouraging this revolution where you have a generation of people who are prepared to go out there and look for something special, something different."

His mission is "not just about cheese, it's about a whole way of life. If we want small farmhouse production and quality of milk, we need to encourage rare breeds, we want regions to have an identity. There are social implications, because the industrial system . . . encourages mass co-operative milk production and ultimately those farmers have to either get bigger to meet the market price or they don't exist."

Footage of Studd at a Melbourne tip in 2003 burying 85 kilograms of Roquefort wrapped in a French flag made the nightly news the world over. The stunt came at the end of a costly and drawn-out campaign to have bans on raw-milk cheeses lifted.

While the campaign was partially successful — Roquefort and "cooked" raw-milk cheeses such as Gruyere can now be sold, but the ban continues on other raw-milk cheeses — Studd continues to rail against Australia's food regulations.

"Australia has to change, and one of the reasons to show what's happening in America, and Quebec, is to say that even the Americans are ahead of us."

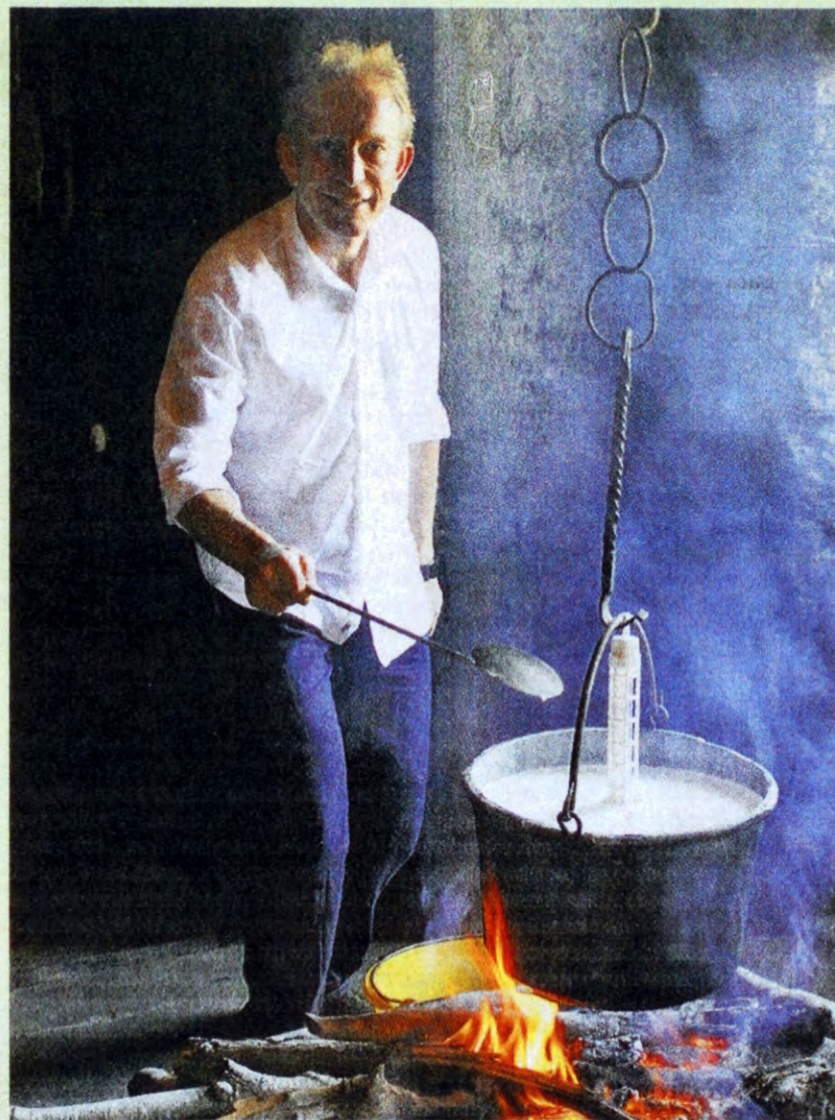
The resurgence of

traditional and farmhouse cheeses in the US and elsewhere, Studd argues, is in no small part due to the use of raw milk. Cheese should have character and flavour. It should reflect the region it came from and the skill of the cheesemaker — qualities that have been gradually lost during 100 years of pasteurisation, bulk industrial production and the hegemony of supermarkets.

But despite his firebrand tendencies, Studd wants *Cheese Slices* to steer clear of politics. He says he was criticised for an episode (in the previous series) on Basque cheeses that didn't deal with the politics of the region, and anticipates similar complaints in an episode about cheesemaking in Cyprus. Haloumi is made on both Greek and Turkish parts of the island, but a lot of cheesemaking has been lost due to the political unrest. He says viewers need to draw their own conclusions, "but it's not for me to do that".

*Cheese Slices*, says Studd, is as much about "aspirational travel" as it is about information. By that, he's speaking for the viewer and himself. For the launch of the previous series he travelled to India, where it is seen on a satellite channel accessible to an audience of 35 million. There he learned that India produces more cow's milk than Europe.

"So why doesn't India have a cheese industry?" he asks rhetorically, noting the



Will Studd uses the traditional method to make a batch of cheese.

widespread use of paneer, a soft cottage cheese, in local cuisine. The only conclusion Studd can draw is that Hinduism prohibits the killing of a cow, from which is obtained rennet, required for setting the milk.

"But if you go back into history there are other ways to set cheese. That was the extraordinary thing about Portugal. They set cheese with thistle, and that goes back to pre-Roman times when animals were so precious that to kill them (for rennet) was too big a call."

Studd never envisaged that *Cheese Slices* would go the distance of 31 episodes but he's not through yet, with plans to film episodes on Australian cheeses.

"It wasn't meant to be about me at all. When you look at the early series, I try to not be in any of it, but more and more I get dragged in. I'm not trying to be Jamie Oliver or Kylie Kwong. I want to just tell the story of cheese."

A new series of *Cheese Slices* premieres on Saturday at 7.30pm on Lifestyle. Previews, page 28