

Tempo

Italian style in South Australia

History of Adelaide's
Italian restaurants

100 years of Alfa

URSINI
A FAMILY
JOURNEY

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What made you decide to move overseas from your home country?

My job and a passion for what I'm doing, and looking for new horizons – this was the main thing. I've been working in this field, in biomedical research, since 2002, I was doing it in a renowned Italian orthopaedic institute.

At conferences I came in touch with experts from Adelaide and stayed in contact with them, and now I'm here.

I was thinking about Australia, about the weather and wine. Particularly South Australia. It represents the Mediterranean climate and wine is a big topic for me. I love it, and I have undertaken appreciation courses.

I had the offer to come over, and in Italy at the moment it is not so easy to get a job in research and development. They are cutting everywhere, but Australia is still a new and expanding society. The opportunities at the moment are bigger here for young, skilled, bright-minded people.

How long do you think you'll be in Australia?

My contract lasts at least another year and if things go well, as they are now, I hope I will stay for even longer. I'm involved in many activities out of work which are related somehow to work – societies and things – where we interact on a social level. If things go as they are going I could stay for the rest of my life.

What are the biggest changes you've noticed in your time abroad?

Many things work really differently here and have different importance to people. Certain things are more likely to be fair here, like you would expect when you were a child. Students come up and say: "I want to be an engineer, a pharmacist, a lawyer" and it ends up they become it. It's not just they get the degree, they get the job. In Italy it's not really going that way. It's very likely at the moment you'll get a job which is not related to your field.

There is more dignity for researchers here. In Adelaide it is like it was in Italy 50 years ago – fairly paid, highly regarded and rewarded. At the moment you wouldn't think of being in research necessarily because it's very unlikely you'll get a permanent position or be well paid.

As an Italian I have to talk about food! In Adelaide I see a lot of educated people having just chips and gravy for lunch. You would never see people in Italy go into Hungry Jacks for lunch. The restaurants in Adelaide – in too many places you have to order at the counter, take the number and there is no tablecloth.

In Australia, more people have basic knowledge and understanding of wine; they can discuss wine and at least say something about it. In Italy we probably drink more wine, but there is more basic general knowledge here.

Have there been any particular difficulties you have encountered?

Not really. I had moved to Belgium for a while



before coming to Australia and once you are uprooted it is easy to move again.

Any unexpected highlights?

There are saving accounts here with 5 per cent interest rates. In Italy the best you get is 2.5 per cent and they're locked for a year! We had the GFC over there, but not really here. This was a good surprise.

What do you miss most about your home country?

Mozzarella. Especially buffalo. It's not the same here. And my family and friends back in Italy of course. I communicate on phone, email and Skype. Luckily I sometimes go to conferences in Europe, so I might get to see them once a year. They've been here as well.

The vibe in the streets as well, at home it's a bit less about plain drinking. You don't need to have many drinks to be considered social. It's more just about getting together to be social.

Also, skiing in winter less than two hours from home. You can here but it's harder. And at home I have a big scooter which I don't have here.

What surprised you most about your new country?

No GFC and another thing is the relationship with China, Australia's biggest commercial partner. In Italy the general population see China as an unfair competitor for many industries. Lots of people think of China as the place where Italian ideas are copied and then manufactured by underpaid workers.

If you had one piece of advice to give to someone who is about to make the same move, what would it be?

First, learn English before you come. To the young Italians, fresh-minded, specialised with a university degree, skilled – they should just do it and come over, but while doing this they shouldn't forget who they are and where they come from because it is an asset.

Often the way for young people coming over here is they think the whole world is looking constantly at Italy and know what the situation is, which is not the case. Luckily, they don't and here you are what you are. When you get off the plane you are just a person with 23kg of luggage.

You come from a place rich of culture, history, technology and design – world renowned for that. Don't waste time complaining about your country or saying this is different here so I don't like it. Give it a shake and use your education, skills and contacts and knowledge. You know exactly how things work over there and you may be a bridging link between two countries in a professional and social way.

What are your favourite things about your new home?

Adelaide is surrounded by wineries in the Adelaide Hills and over to the beach. I come from the Alps; my town is north of Verona. For me having both the mountains and the beach is perfect. Also, gum trees – I like them a lot, and we don't have them in Italy.