

HD **Bread** for the world

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"Are you Filipina?" The question is out of courtesy as there was no mistaking the accent behind the Australian, the brown smiling face, the manner about Jocelyn Cabel Muller. As it turns out she is a GI, a genuine Ilocana, blown Down Under via **Hong Kong**. I had come to Abhi's **Bread** looking for a loaf of fruit and nut sourdough, all its dark brown, chewy yumminess cut only by the crunch of walnuts, reminiscent of weekends in Germany. The open shelves are stocked with loaves and rolls in six mix rye, wholemeal and seed, organic white, sesame and sunflower, rustic ciabatta. In the cool glass cabinets are cakes and pastries. A gingerbread house with white snow icing stands ready for a Christmas table. Jocelyn apologizes, they're out of fruit and nut, and suggests an organic polenta and sultana roll. OK, but even then, my eyes are straying to the gluten-free chocolate mudcake with ganache topping and then to a loaf of my friend Kerry's favorite spelt sourdough.

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Ever since Kerry told me about Abhi's, I knew I had to scour for it in South Fremantle. It ticked all the boxes: Organic, artisan, authentic European, locally grown grain, off-the-tourist track. I order a polenta roll and an almond croissant. As she rings up the **sale**, Jocelyn says, "Well, I have part of a fruit and nut loaf that I can give you." Was she sure? "No worries, in fact, if you want this other loaf from yesterday, I'll give them both to you!" The loaves sell at A\$9.80 each and the ones she was holding up seemed like they just had only an end sliced off. In a bakery that had achieved cult status, here was a Filipina gaily handing out loaves as if they were hers to give away. Jocelyn is married to the bakery owner, Heinz, who learned to bake in his native Switzerland. Heinz bought Abhi's in 1999, making **bread** entirely by hand. From being its only full-time worker aided only by a part-time employee 15 years ago, Heinz now has Jocelyn who knows both the baking and the **business** side. On their payroll are 42 full-time and casual employees from Australia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Taiwan, Italy, New Zealand and the Philippines, many of them students. They fill three shifts over 24/7 to meet wholesale orders and the smaller demand at the bakeshop. Jocelyn and Heinz met in 2006 through a dating site boasting "two **million** Filipino beauties." By then a widow, Jocelyn was working as a nanny in **Hong Kong** to support her two young children. After the initial texts and e-mails, Heinz visited **Hong Kong** and in less than a year, Jocelyn was on a two-week holiday in Australia. "I knew he was a baker, but wasn't sure if he really owned Abhi's. So why Abhi's and not Heinz's **Bread**?" Heinz's story apparently checked out. Besides, Jocelyn says, there was no job security working as a domestic helper in **Hong Kong**. When they can take time off, the Mullers have two additional countries to visit. Her son now works in a nursing home in Taiwan. Her daughter works in Korea, speaks the language fluently, and is married to a South Korean with whom she has a son. The steady stream of customers takes Jocelyn away from our table. She returns with a cuppa, proud of her barista skills. The cappuccino has a cap of velvety crema, the coffee smooth. What's the secret of your being together, partners in life and partners in **business**, I ask Heinz. "She talks a lot about the **business**," Heinz says, "and I just walk by." Heinz looks at her fondly. "She is very funny and cheeky and makes a joke of everything." "That sounds like a Swiss accent!" a woman exclaims with delight as she enters the shop. She and Heinz switch to Swiss German and soon she is showing him pictures of gum paste flowers made by her daughter. They agree to ask the teenager to consider selling her work to the bakery. And so grows the family—and it's not only because Abhi's makes good **bread**. Abhi's **Bread** is on Facebook: www.facebook.com/AbhisBread

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