

FINALIST

TRADITIONALLY TUSCAN PANFORTE DI SIENA

The pretty paper package is tied with brown string and stamped with a red wax seal - open it and the rich aromas of fruit and spices rise up to greet you. Paula Barbafiglia's taken care to ensure that her panforte di Siena is every bit as authentic - and as delicious - as one you'd buy in Italy.

Paula and her husband, Gianni, met in their native South Africa - Gianni's father moved to South Africa as a young man, leaving his extended family behind in Italy. "Gianni's grandmother used to send us panforte from Siena, but when she died our supplies dried up," recalls Paula. By that time the pair were hooked, and started researching how to make it themselves. "We were going by the memory of a taste and it took us years to get the recipe right."

The production of a perfect panforte coincided with the family's move to Christchurch. At the time, The Mediterranean Food Company had just opened in the city. "We went to them with our two pans and said, 'Oh, we make panforte'," says Paula. "That's really how it all started."

Traditionally Tuscan now makes four different types of panforte. And the secret recipe? "Quality ingredients and not trying to save money on anything. It's just good old-fashioned hard work."

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