

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Brucciani: City's best since 1937

WHEN it opened in September 1937, Brucciani's advertised itself as an "oasis in the city" – and it still is, 75 years on.

Over the decades, the family-run firm has become a much-loved Leicester institution and memories have been created in its cafes. New mums relaxed there after doing the shopping, couples courted, friends met up for a night out and, during the Second World War, the Horsefair Street branch was a popular hangout for American soldiers looking for coffee which reminded them of home. Today, Brucciani's is still go-



DYNASTY: The first Luigi

ing strong, with two bustling cafes in the city centre, its own craft bakery in Bath Lane making delicious cakes, breads and sandwiches each day, and a thriving delivery service.

The founder of Brucciani's was Luigi whose grandfather had walked from Italy to Britain in the early 1800's, seeking his fortune and bringing the art of ice-cream making with him. His son set up a successful café and ice cream parlour in Barrow-in-Furness where Luigi learned his trade before striking out on his own.

Borrowing £500 from his dad and £500 from the bank, he chose Leicester, then dubbed the second most prosperous city in Europe, as the place to be. On September 4, 1937, Luigi opened Brucciani's Cafe and Ice Cream Parlour in Horsefair Street, taking £5 10s 8d. He never looked back.

Brucciani's – which opened late every night and had a self-service policy – was a revelation to a Leicester population used to waitress-service cafes,

for whom a night out meant going to the pub or paying for an expensive meal.

"He hit the right time to open," says his grandson, Tom, who is now managing director. "There were not many places that you could just pop in with friends and have a chat, without spending a lot of money, so the late night coffee shops became a real hit.

"Coffee was trendy and glamorous and ice cream was a treat. He sold the business on the speed of service. You would come in and the coffee cups would be poured out."

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s the Brucciani cafe thrived – cleverly adapting its ice cream recipe to cope with the demands of rationing – and cementing its reputation as the place to be seen in Leicester.

Olive oil, then more likely to be found at the chemist's, rather than the grocery store, was imported and sold. Leaflets explaining its uses were printed.

EXPANSION

The 1960s heralded a time of expansion, which began with the opening of its Fox Lane cafe in 1960. By now, Luigi's son Michael had joined the business, and, in 1962, they bought JS Winn and Co.

This deal gave them their own bakery in Bath Lane from which staff could prepare cakes, pastries and the like.

The deal also brought four more cafes, three of which were closed quite quickly – the Royal, by the railway station; one by the Clock Tower and the old Oriental, in Market Place.

Brucciani's also took over the Turkey Cafe, which it ran until the 1980s.

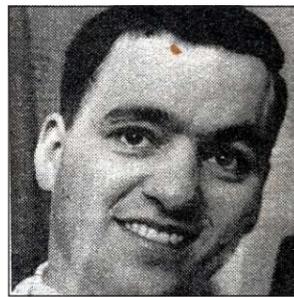
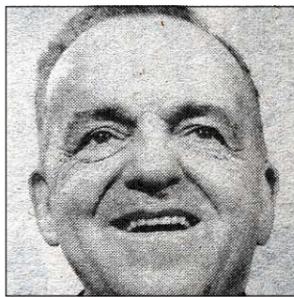
It was at the Turkey Cafe you could find Brucciani's Ladies Lounge, a man-free zone for women to enjoy tea and a natter – at least, up until the law changed in the 1970s.

During the 1960s, Michael introduced the character of "Fred" in a marketing campaign. Brucciani's also ran an OAP loyalty card, which still continues today.

The Church Gate branch was built in 1979, and soon became



LEICESTER LEGEND: The original Brucciani's in Horsefair Street, Leicester, an instant hit when it opened in 1937



FOUNDER: Luigi Brucciani, left, and his son Michael

as popular as the rest. Sadly, in 1992, the original Horsefair Street café closed when the lease could not be renewed.

The old cash ledgers from the shop are still kept in an archive by Tom today.

In its pages are, in a way, the story of Leicester. Here, in neatly-written fountain pen, you'll find an eyewitness record to the changing city, from the Haymarket being built to the three-day week, rising unemployment, new shops opening, old ones closing, factories moving and the ups and downs of Leicester City. When Michael's son, Robert, joined in 1993, he introduced daily delivery rounds for office workers. Tom joined the business in 1998.

And it's not just the family who have stayed with the company for generations – staff are just as loyal.

"We're a family business in terms of being run by a family, but also in terms of our staff – they become part of the family," says Tom. "We have people at the bakery who joined as apprentices in the 1970s; Jim Wise, the shop manager at Horsefair Street, was there for

his entire career. When one of our managers, Raynor Thompson, retired a couple of years ago, I realised she had been working for us since before I was born! Our long years of success would not have been possible without such wonderful staff."

Brucciani's delicious dairy ice cream, made with double cream and fresh milk, is still popular today as it ever was, but the recipe remains a family secret!

The decision to specialise in the bakery side has paid off, with its own artisan breads, sandwiches, pastries and cream cakes delighting customers every day and supplying a growing wholesale trade. "It helps us to be a little bit different and to make tasty products you just can't get elsewhere.

"We are also proud to say that the skill of our craft bakers has been recognised with five national awards in the last two years," said Tom. To celebrate its 75th anniversary, Brucciani's threw a party at its cafes.

Among the guests was Sylvia Fawcett, 75, of Thurnby, who

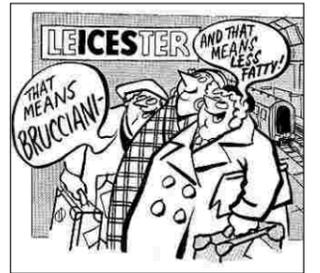


MODERN DAY: Managing director Tom Brucciani, centre back, with staff from the Fox Lane cafe. Below, original cartoon art advertising Brucciani's ice cream

was taken as a baby to the opening of the Horsefair Street cafe in 1937.

Tom has arranged for Brucciani's to have a makeover to mark the milestone.

Its branding harks back to the original sign done by Luigi all those years ago. "It's about heritage," says Tom. "The Brucciani's name is such a part of Leicester, after all."



Proud to be associated with & congratulations on your 75th BRUCCIANI

Logos of associated businesses: CREEDS, BAKO North Western, ACCLAIM ENVIRONMENTAL, W. ARCHER & SON LTD, WMS, KIRBY & WEST, Keencraft, abevco, B&R, PKF, Chris Collett, ADAMS PRODUCE, Crowndale.