



Produced by  
Yarra Bank Films Pty Ltd, Black Sheep Films Pty Ltd,  
& La Sarraz Pictures Srl.



ANDYINC FOUNDATION



# Chef Antonio's Recipes for Revolution

A Feature documentary film

## SYNOPSES

### Log line

A delicious, feel good story with heart, soul & a big serve of laughter.

### One Paragraph Synopsis

Chef Antonio de Benedetto is on a quest, to change the world with his delicious Italian food. His apprentices are Mirko Piras, a young man born with Down syndrome, who dreams of becoming a great chef 'just like Antonio' and Jessica Berta, an ambitious waitress who's also set her sights on a career among the pots and pans. Their tiny kitchen is the beating heart of a revolutionary restaurant and hotel like no other. Both are staffed by young men and women living with Down syndrome who come from across Italy to train and work in hospitality, so they can take their place at the table of life. *Chef Antonio's Recipes for Revolution*, is their closely observed story, told in first person by Antonio, Mirko and Jessica. It's a journey through their lives and loves, dreams and dramas.



### One Page Synopsis

*A delicious, feel good story with heart, soul & a big serve of laughter*

Chef Antonio de Benedetto is on a quest, to change the world with his delicious Italian food.

His apprentices are Mirko Piras, a young man born with Down syndrome, who dreams of becoming a great chef ‘just like Antonio’ and Jessica Berta, an ambitious waitress who’s also set her sights on a career among the pots and pans. Their tiny kitchen is the beating heart of a revolutionary restaurant and hotel like no other. Both are staffed by young men and women living with Down syndrome, who come from across Italy to train and work in hospitality, so they can take their place at the table of life.

*Chef Antonio’s Recipes for Revolution*, is their closely observed story, told in first person by Antonio, Mirko and Jessica. It’s a journey through their lives and loves, dreams and dramas.

Antonio has a heart as big as his chef’s hat, with a generosity of spirit matched only by the quality of his cuisine. Mirko has a youthful vitality and a hunger to learn all there is to know about the craft of a fine restaurant kitchen. Jessica loves to prepare and serve the restaurant’s desserts. Their heart-felt story unfolds in the medieval town of Asti, in Italy’s northern Piedmont region, famous for its wine and culinary heritage.

Chef Antonio is creating a gastronomic revolution by bridging intellectual disability, the culinary arts and Italian hospitality. New trainees are handed a 40cm kitchen knife and told to, ‘*Start chopping! Veloce, veloce! Quick smart!*’

In 2015, Antonio co-founded the Albergo Etico (Ethical Hotel), the first of its kind in the world. Guests are welcomed, shown to their room, cooked for and served by young Italian men and women living with Down syndrome. At Chef Antonio’s Tacabanda Restaurant, diners find a warm welcome, good food and staff eager to make their dining memorable.

Mouth-watering Italian dishes, unique to the region, are made, as Mirko struggles to learn his craft. We meet his mum, Franca and girlfriend, Francesca, whom he passionately loves and hopes to marry. But living with Down syndrome, learning a trade, and leading independent lives is complex and does not always go as planned.

*Chef Antonio’s Recipes for Revolution* is a cinematic invitation to experience the behind the scenes story of this unique restaurant and hotel, as its staff embark on a journey to take their vision to the wider world, while forever changing the lives of those who are its heart and soul.





ABOUT THE MAKING OF

# **Chef Antonio's Recipes for Revolution**

an Australia – Italy co-production

*Made with the support of  
Screen Australia, MIBACT – Italian Ministry of Culture, Film Victoria,  
Film Commission Torino Piemonte, AndyInc Foundation, Soundfirm,  
Melbourne International Film Festival Premiere Fund,  
Documentary Australia Foundation & Antidote Films*



## **DIRECTOR'S VIEW Trevor Graham**

This story started for me over a dinner date in Sydney with my editor Andrew Arestides and his wife Tracylee. Our families are good friends. Franny, their eldest daughter, is 28 and living with Down syndrome. Tracylee, a disability rights advocate in NSW, insisted she had a great story idea to tell me. She knew very well that I have a passion for social issue films with food themes like, *Monsieur Mayonnaise* (2016) and *Make Hummus Not War* (2012). She knew I was fishing for story ideas to complete my trilogy of food themed documentaries. So, whilst cooking our dinner she pitched her idea.

Tracylee had recently been to Asti in northern Italy and stayed at an extraordinary hotel, the Albergo Etico and met the inspirational chef at the heart of it all, Antonio de Benedetto. Tracylee told me how revolutionary the Albergo Etico and the Tacabanda Restaurant are for people living with Down syndrome. And more than that, its Chef was a great character who

would work well on screen. His recipes were delicious, and true to the unique, regional Piemontese cuisine. My appetite was whetted and within months I was on a plane to Asti with cinematographer Jenni Meaney. I was taking a punt. But I figured if the scenarios were as good as Tracylee suggested, and I trusted her judgement, then let's go and film it properly. Little did I know that this would be the first of seven film shoots and that I would be going back and forth between Sydney and Asti for the next three years.

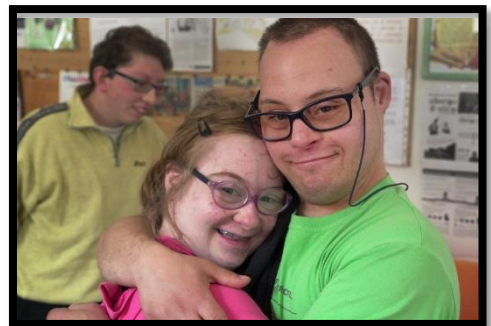


*Chef Antonio's Recipes for Revolution* ticks a lot of boxes for me. The film is character led and collectively their stories offer humour, warmth, passion, dreams and pathos. This closely observed human story, resulted from the six months of filming I did between 2017 and 2020. Over this period, I lived at the hotel and ate at the Tacabanda Restaurant, so I had great access to their work places and witnessed their day to day lives, from morning to night.

When I first met Mirko Piras he talked eloquently about his life, his girlfriend Francesca, his dreams and aspirations. One of the first things he told me was, '*Francesca is an angel. I want to marry her*'. So, when I eventually met Francesca and Mirko's mother Franca, I knew there was a fabulous family story just waiting to be told.

But Chef Antonio would be the lynchpin, the glue, for the story. On screen, a director cannot ask for a more compelling character than Chef Antonio. His humour and warmth, his passion for food and wish to enhance the lives of his trainees living with Down syndrome is captivating. His kitchen is miniscule, but in it a huge social revolution has begun for people with intellectual disabilities. His innovations are changing lives.

Chef Antonio's personal narrative has tremendous appeal. The Albergo Etico, literally 'ethical hotel', trains people with intellectual disabilities to work in all areas of hospitality, as chefs, hotel workers, and waiters. It's an opportunity of a lifetime, for people who otherwise have often been shunned by society, or given very limited options within their families. Training at the hotel opens the door to future independent living for the trainees. For my part the story oozes humanity and affection. I wanted it to be one of those feel good stories that leave you smiling as you leave the cinema.



As with my recent food related films, *Make Hummus Not War* and *Monsieur Mayonnaise*, I wanted to direct a tight story, quirky in style, humorous, mouth-watering and poignant. Along with the observational camera style, the film needed to be visually surprising with moments of animation to highlight appropriate personal stories and recipes. Over the three years the bonds of friendship grew to be very strong, so much so, that in true observational style, we the filmmakers disappeared. The action in front of camera is raw, spontaneous, humorous and

sometimes dramatic. We were ‘sculpting’ this story in real time. Jenni Meaney and I also came up with idea of shooting the black and white studio portraits with all the characters – so audiences can engage directly with their faces, their eyes, their smiles and frowns, because they reveal so much.

The life of the Albergo Etico, like the recipes Chef Antonio offers his diners, are ruled by the four seasons of the Piemonte terrain. So, the long-time frame for filming was an opportunity to create ‘a year in the life story’ about the characters, their cuisine and the Piemonte landscape.



But the binding ingredients of the story, are Mirko, Antonio and Jessica. They are the storytellers. This, I believe, is the *unique feature* of this film project. It is a story told from the point-of-view of two lead characters living with Down syndrome, in their own words. Throughout the film, as Mirko’s personal family story unfolds, we find out about Down syndrome, not through

facts or statistics, but personal family stories.

Moral and ethical questions can arise in a film dealing with disability. *What can you show? How intimate can it be? What is the line of consent that you can and can’t cross?* I was given extraordinary access by Antonio and that required extra ordinary consideration on my part as a director.

The onscreen intimacy of Mirko and Francesca prompted much discussion among audiences at test screenings. Some felt the physical intimacy between Mirko and Francesca and the heated argument they have crossed the line, and was intrusive. Others felt it reflected real life – even beautiful – which is my own view. The real test though came when Mirko and his mother Franca viewed the entire film just before it was completed. This can be challenging for a director and confronting for participants. But ... they loved it! So did Antonio. There were tears, laughter and genuine enjoyment. It’s fantastic how humour can transcend culture and language. The sound of laughter in the air was magic.

The film shoot itself was not without its own dramas – particularly the last 10-day shoot in March 2020, when Covid-19 broke out in the neighbouring northern region of Lombardy with escalating infections and a devastating death toll.

We had felt safe in Asti, but that too vanished. The town was soon deserted. We woke up to empty streets and empty restaurants. The *joie de vie* of this small town was quickly shattered and replaced with fear. Antonio’s restaurant came to a standstill. All the trainees returned to their families. It rapidly became very dramatic, and more than a



little scary for us, in terms of getting back to Australia. We left in the nick of time, with our rushes and gear, just as Italy went into total lockdown.

But we left something of ourselves behind, bonds of friendship, bound more tightly by the threat of the encroaching virus. The moments of goodbye were tense awful and quick. Not the usual, *abbraccio*, a hug and kiss on both cheeks, that is *molto Italiano*. Would this be the last time we would see each other? Would we get out of Italy? What would be the destiny of our friends and colleagues we were leaving behind – the many families we’ve been working with to make our film? The virus in the north was quickly spreading and killing people.

Our exodus was tense and a little frightening, but we made it home safely, and virus free. Importantly, all the folks in Asti survived, and none were infected. After more than three months of lock down the hotel opened again and also the Tacabanda.

Making a film is like rolling dice. But the real possibility of financing the film kicked in when Lisa Wang decided, instantly on seeing the trailer, to produce the project as did executive producers Andrew Myer, Jenny Lalor, Roger Savage & Gil Scrine. They were involved in the same fashion on our previous production, *Monsieur Mayonnaise* (Berlin, Melbourne) and their creative support, friendship and nurturing of the project was invaluable. It simply wouldn’t have happened without them.

One of the novel aspects of this production was meeting producer, Alessandro Borrelli, from La Sarraz Pictures, at the Sydney Film Festival in 2018. La Sarraz is an Italian production company that produces and distributes both drama and documentary. I had already completed two film shoots in Asti when I met Alessandro. He loved the idea of the film, not least because the story takes place in his home region of Piemonte, famed for its culinary and wine traditions. Asti is just 30 minutes from Torino where he is based. It was largely due to Alessandro that the film has become only the second Official Co-production under the Treaty arrangement between Italy and Australia. It means that *Chef Antonio’s Recipes for Revolution* will have an extensive theatrical release throughout Italy in 2021. Alessandro became my second producer partner along with Lisa.

A director is only as good as his or her creative collaborators. Producer Lisa Wang brought her considerable enthusiasm for the story and its characters and has been supportive all the way. She came to Asti for one of the shoots and fell in love with hotel and its staff. Jenni Meaney brought her vast experience and talented eye, helping establish the observational look of the film that we both eventually shot together. Editor Andrew Arestides brought his extensive creative skills and his special character insights as a parent of an adult daughter with Down syndrome. Editing took almost 6 months to get the story just how we wanted it to be. It wasn’t that we had shot too much footage. It was more that we had a lot of ‘gems’ to deal with, many great stories, characters and scenes which did not make their way into the finished film. Such is filmmaking! Emma Kelly created charming animations that enhanced the story and composer





Cezary Skubiszewski created an incredible score that beautifully binds the characters, with the film's themes, humour, emotion, drama and overarching story. I had a great creative team to work with.

It's no mean feat making a film almost completely in Italian when you don't speak Italian. I had an interpreter and assistant director to work with much of the time during the seven shoots. But not always. I'm often asked, '*How did I manage?*' I followed my intuition. I was led by the action in front of camera. If it was interesting to watch then I'd shoot. At least 50% of the time I found that the conversation on camera was uninteresting. But then again, I also discovered some gems. So, I'm a big fan of following one's intuition in filmmaking.

As director, I'd like to leave audiences contemplating one significant question about our film, '*What does 'normal' mean?*' Removing the boxes we humans tend to place people in, is the first priority of the film. This is very much the take away theme from the film.



**Producer Lisa Wang says:** Working with Trevor on *Chef Antonio's Recipes for Revolution* felt like a perfect fit for me. It's such a privilege to explore the lives of others whilst providing a voice for those who appear to be the "black sheep" of our world.

### PRODUCER BIOGS



**Lisa Wang** is a producer and line producer of scripted television and feature films; best known for the hit comedy series, *Please Like Me* (2014 – 2016), *Frayed* (2019), *The Family Law* (2019) and telemovies *The Blake Mysteries* (2018), *Dr Blake Mysteries* (2017).

Wang's passion for documentary was sparked in 1998 when she wrote, directed and produced her first documentary *Reunion* (SBSi). A moving story about her search for identity and belonging and a personal quest to understand her immigrant high-profile father, David Wang; a visionary man who transformed Melbourne's Chinatown into a vibrant hub and the city's first Asian councilor. It won an ATOM Award and a Bronze Plaque at the Columbus International Film Festival (2000), and saw Wang participate as *First Appearance Director* at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam. Wang's next documentary, *PS I*



*Love You* (Big Picture ABC TV) explored the confusion of adolescence. It also won Bronze at the Columbus International Film Festival (2001).

Wang was introduced to Trevor Graham by Ned Lander to jointly produce the feature documentary *Monsieur Mayonnaise* (2016), which premiered at the Melbourne International Film Festival (2016) and the Berlin International Film Festival (2017) among many others. The film sparked a friendship with Graham which led to their next collaboration on *Chef Antonio's Recipes for Revolution* (2020). Both films were supported by the Melbourne International Film Festival Premiere Fund.



**Trevor Graham** has worked as a writer, producer and director of documentary in the Australian industry for almost 40 years. His documentaries have been screened and broadcast nationally and around the world. He has made numerous co-productions and commissioned works for Channel 4 and the BBC (Britain), WGBH (America), ARTE (France/Germany), AVRO (Netherlands), SBS and ABC TV (Australia). In 1997 Graham wrote and directed, *Mabo Life of an Island Man*, a feature film about Eddie Koiki Mabo's personal struggle for recognition of his native title rights to his home on

Murray Island in the Torres Strait. The film won the Australian Film Institute Award for Best Documentary, was nominated for a Logie and won both the prestigious NSW Premier's History Award and the NSW Premier's Award for Best Screenplay.

Throughout 2002 and 2003 Graham lived for a year in Arnhem Land where he directed and filmed, *Lonely Boy Richard*, for ABC TV, an intimate account of alcohol addiction and one man's personal journey to jail. The project was nominated for an AFI Award Best Documentary in 2004.

Graham was a Commissioning Editor for Documentary at Australia's multi-cultural broadcaster SBS-TV, where he worked for three years. He has also worked in online documentary producing and directing, *Homeless* for ABC online, nominated for a Webby Award, an 'on-line Oscar' by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences and *Mabo - The Native Title Revolution*, ([www.mabonativetitle.com.au](http://www.mabonativetitle.com.au)) which was nominated for a British Academy Award (BAFTA) and won the 2008 United Nations of Australia Peace Award.

In 2010 Graham was awarded a Doctorate of Creative Arts from the University of Technology Sydney UTS. He wrote & directed *Make Hummus Not War* (2012), for the Melbourne International Film Festival's Premiere Fund. It went on to screen at the Berlin Film Festival's Kulinary Kino side bar and over 60 international film festivals. *Monsieur Mayonnaise* (2016) was made for Melbourne International Film Festival's Premiere Fund and was commissioned by ZDF-ATRE where it screened in prime-time across France and Germany. It was selected for Berlin (2017) and won numerous awards and screened at many international film festivals.

*Chef Antonio's Recipes for Revolution* completes Graham's 'culinary trilogy' It too was made for the Melbourne International Film Festival's Premiere Fund and is an Official Australia – Italy Treaty co-production.

## CREATIVE TEAM BIOGS

**Jenni Meaney Cinematographer**

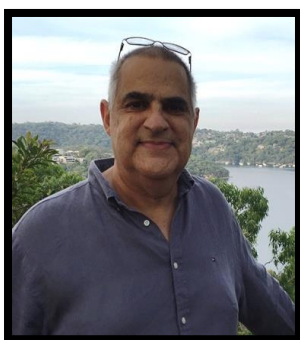
Telling stories through pictures first attracted Jenni to the film industry. She learnt her trade working at the ABC Sydney shooting art and science programs, working on the Frenchs Forest drama crew and eventually filming 'Four Corners'.

After returning to Melbourne Jenni focusing her attention on filming documentaries, which suited her natural curiosity about the world and the people who inhabit it.

She filmed a diverse range of projects all over the world including 'The Tenth dancer', 'Grey Nomads', 'Make Hummus Not War' and 'Monsieur Mayonnaise'. She also filmed two series of the award-winning comedy 'The Games'.

More recently Jenni has broadened the scope of her film work by working on a range of multimedia for exhibitions and online in the cultural sector.

From time to time documentaries call her and she can't resist...

**Andrew Arestides ASE Editor**

Andrew's credits include, *Fairweather Man*, an examination of the life and work of Australian artist Ian Fairweather - winner NSW Premier's Award for Scriptwriting 2010. *The Cars That Ate China*, for which he was awarded the ASE award for Best Editing of a Documentary 2008. He co-produced and edited, *Junction House Blues* for SBS; *Hurley - The Man who made History* an ABC/BBC co-production screening at the 2006 SFF; *Secrets of the Jury Room* for SBS which screened at the SFF 2004. Andrew also cut, *Facing The Demons* a powerful story of restorative justice which won a Logie and the UN Peace Award for TV Documentary in 2000; the acclaimed AFI award-winning, *Wedding in Ramallah*.

In 2003 Andrew was co-recipient of an AFI award for Best Achievement in Editing a non-feature film for *Painting with Light in a Dark World*. In 2006 Andrew took part in the Sundance Edit Labs, Utah, in his role as editor on *Kidnapped!*, a one hour documentary on the random abduction of Japanese citizens by the North Korean government. He was awarded his second ASE Award for Best Editing in a Documentary in 2010 for his work on *My Asian Heart* directed by David Bradbury. In 2015 he edited *Afghanistan Inside Australia's War*, a 3 part series for the ABC directed by Victoria Pitt and *The Baulkham Hills African Ladies Troupe* a feature documentary directed by Ros Horin, which was premiered at the Sydney Film Festival. In 2016 he edited *Monsieur Mayonnaise* a feature documentary directed by Trevor Graham, for the Melbourne International Film Festival and ZDF-ARTE.

### Cezary Skubiszewski Composer

Cezary is internationally awarded composer. Amongst his credits: *The Sapphires*, *Red Dog*, *Beneath Hill 60*, *Two Hands*, *Death Defying Acts*, *Bran Nue Dae*, *Lilian's Story* and *The Broken Shore*. He received ACCTA Awards for the score to *Bootmen* and *La Spagnola* and International Film Critics Award for the music to documentary *Night*. His Carlton Draught 'Big Ad' and 'VB Stubby Symphony' became a sensation all over the world. Cezary's latest works include the film scores to USA film *Tiger*, Polish Film *Karbala* Malaysian film *Almayer's Folly* and Australian films *Oddball* and *Red Dog – True Blue*. In 2003 Cezary received the Centenary Medal for service to Australian Society and Australian Film Production and in 2010 Film Critics Circle of Australia – Award in recognition of outstanding contribution to Australian Cinema. In 2016 Cezary received a Best Music Score AACTA Award for his music on *Monsieur Mayonnaise* a feature documentary about Melbourne's Mora family



### CREDITS

Produced by

Yarra Bank Films Pty Ltd  
Black Sheep Films Pty Ltd  
La Sarraz Pictures

Produced in association with







**ANDYINC** FOUNDATION



**antidote**films

**CREDIT LIST**

Writer, Producer & Director	TREVOR GRAHAM
Producers	LISA WANG & ALESSANDRO BORRELLI
Executive Producers	ANDREW MYER, GIL SCRINE ROGER SAVAGE, JENNY LALOR
Editor	ANDREW ARESTIDES ASE
Cinematographers	JENNI MEANEY & TREVOR GRAHAM
Composer	CEZARY SKUBISZEWSKI
Sound	TREVOR GRAHAM & JENNI MEANEY
Animation	EMMA KELLY & JAMES TRAN
Assistant Director	LORENZO BOMBARA
Post Supervisor	ANDREW MCVITTY
Online Editor	JOHN KERRON
Sound Designer	LEE YEE
Sound Mixer	CHRIS GOODES

**DISTRIBUTION & SALES**

**INTERNATIONAL BROADCAST SALES**

**FLAME DISTRIBUTION**

Unit 2, 65 Whiting Street  
Artarmon, NSW 2064 Australia  
TEL: +61 2 8065 4899

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM:  
52 Russell Square  
London  
WC1B 4HP  
United Kingdom  
+44 (0) 207 631 6956  
[fgilroy@flamedistribution.com](mailto:fgilroy@flamedistribution.com)



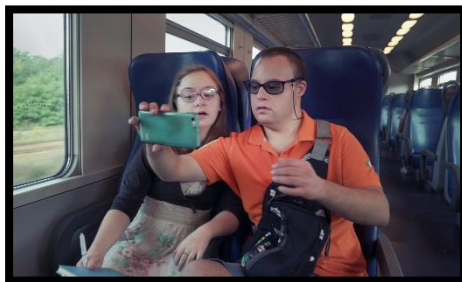
**AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND**

**ANTIDOTE FILMS**

2C / 18 Bimbil Street  
Albion, QLD 4010  
Australia  
ABN 78 143 275 772  
phone: + 61 7 3262 2009  
[www.antidotefilms.com.au](http://www.antidotefilms.com.au)

For **Exhibition** | **Theatrical** bookings:  
[cinema@antidotefilms.com.au](mailto:cinema@antidotefilms.com.au)

For **DVD** enquiries:  
[dvd@antidotefilms.com.au](mailto:dvd@antidotefilms.com.au)



**ITALY**

LA SARRAZ DISTRIBUZIONE  
Piazza Guido Gozzano 15  
IT-10132 Torino  
Italy  
+39 011 5534260  
[lasarrazdistribuzione@gmail.com](mailto:lasarrazdistribuzione@gmail.com)

[www.lasarraz.com](http://www.lasarraz.com)

<https://www.facebook.com/lasarraz.produzione>



[www.facebook.com/chefantoniosrecipesforrevolution](https://www.facebook.com/chefantoniosrecipesforrevolution)  
[yarrabank-films@bigpond.com](mailto:yarrabank-films@bigpond.com)