



Profile

Coming soon – freshly frozen flagship

Larn Qui and Jenelle Moloney share a love of business and life, writes **Paddy Hintz**

THEY don't exactly finish each other's sentences — in fact they wait patiently for each other to finish speaking — but you can imagine them working well together, hammering out deals.

They come from different backgrounds — Larn Qui was born in Vietnam and studied pharmacy; Jenelle Moloney is a former farm girl from country Victoria who first worked as a manager at the Warnambool McDonald's before graduating to Pizza Hut.

But a shared love of business has brought them together. The two directors in a soon-to-be-launched fast food operation in Australia called yogen fruz bonded over tales of pregnancy, motherhood and morning sickness.

Moloney was the franchise manager for Terry White Chemists while Qui was the owner of a Terry White franchise in Victoria when the two became friends around 2001.

"I was pregnant with my first son. We started talking about my morning sickness," Qui says.

They now have two children each, all boys, ranging in age from 2 to 10. But the talk at the time soon turned to other shared passions — business and branding — and they discovered they also shared an enormous capacity for work and parties.

Organising the master franchise of yogen fruz in Australia and establishing

the launch of their first two stores in Brisbane over the holiday period has been squeezed in around Qui's 40th birthday celebrations with 14 friends in Las Vegas earlier this year.

"My 40th is going to be in New York," says Moloney, the junior of the two at 37.

"We like to work really hard but we also like having parties."

With a frozen yoghurt product blended with fresh fruit or other mixables, such as muesli or cookies, the flagship store will open in the heart of Brisbane's unofficial fast-food central, in the Queen Street Mall right near Hungry Jack's. The other outlet will open at Logan Hyperdome.

"We had to outbid a national fashion retailer to get that Albert St site," Qui says.

The investment, they believe, was important for the brand.

"We really wanted to make a big song and dance about who we are and what we have to offer so what better place to say it than the Queen Street Mall," Moloney says.

The pair also drove a hard bargain with the owners of yogen fruz, two brothers who opened the first outlet in Toronto in 1986.

Frustrated by a lack of progress between lawyers in Canada and Australia, Qui and Moloney hopped on a plane for a face-to-face meeting. They signed an agreement for the Australian master franchise and first rights in New Zealand at the first meeting.

Qui knows she got a good deal because she was told by a friend who was negotiating to set up a Hong Kong franchise that no one else was going to get the same offer as the Australians.

"They told my friend we cornered them into it," she laughs. "I'd say they eventually succumbed to our logic or you could say that we beat them into submission."

At last count, yogen fruz operates in more than 1100 locations in 20 countries.

But the company was not the first option for the two women.

Originally they were chasing a deal with a Los Angeles-based company after a friend told Qui frozen yoghurt, mixed or blended with fruit or other toppings, was "taking LA by storm", mainly as a form of meal replacement for breakfast and lunch.

"I was pregnant again (with her son, now two) so I was morning sick and couldn't do anything about it at the time," Qui says. "But after the baby was born I started looking into it."

The pair began talking to the Los Angeles company, but in the midst of negotiations, the company was bought out by Starbucks.

Moloney and Qui then tried to develop their own product but weren't happy with its texture when a Google search uncovered yogen fruz in Canada.

Yogen fruz

THE yogen fruz range is served up in three main ways: blend it, top it or smoothies.

The product comes in four main yoghurt variants: low-fat vanilla, low-fat chocolate, a no-fat and no-sugar vanilla, and a low-fat soft-serve vanilla. These four variants are then either

blended with frozen fruit or made into smoothies.

The low-fat soft-serve vanilla yoghurt is topped with various ingredients, including fresh fruit, cereals, nuts or things such as chocolate, coconut or cookies. The non-dairy option is a sorbet. The retail outlets will also sell cups of fresh fruit.

www.yogenfruz.com



COOL site ...
Larn Qui and
Jenelle Moloney
saw the
possibilities in
their product.