

# Industrial chic

Pollmann sinds 1890, a 128-year-old Dutch retail store with a cool, modern design, has always had family, personal service and cooking at its heart

by Michelle Hespe

Nick and Anke Pollmann, the fourth-generation owners of Pollmann sinds 1890, raised a glass to Nick's great grandfather, Bernhard Pollmann, at the IHA Global Innovation Awards (*gia*) in Chicago this year, to celebrate the store being chosen as one of the five best retail stores in the world. Bernhard opened Pollmann sinds 1890 128 years ago, launching it as a tableware store. Today, the store has evolved into an omni-channel business, with a catch-phrase that sums up the

company's long-held grounding philosophy: "Great home-cooked meals, thanks to Pollmann."

In 2016, having outgrown its former premises (where the store was based for 76 years), Pollmann sinds 1890 dug up its roots and moved to a more modern and easy to access, light-filled, tunnel-shaped space that loyal customers flock to today, for the same reason that they have always gone to Pollmann: to cook great meals.

"After operating from the same

building for 76 years, the relocation of our business was the result of wanting to respond to change, with the focus always being on our customers' needs," explains Anke. "The world is changing, and we have to be flexible and adapt alongside our customers. Consumers are asking for different things compared to what they once did, and you have to be agile to survive in retail today. We are always growing, learning, and adapting."

The new premises are equipped with



the latest technology and clever modern lighting arrangements to showcase an impressive array of cooking products. Pollmann stocks the largest collection of tableware and cutlery in the Netherlands and prides itself on having top quality products, including many that are a surprise to the customer, as the Pollmann team is always seeking out new pieces and fresh innovation.

Inspiration for the design of the store was drawn from Chicago's Eataly and Anthropologie (both must-see inspiring destination stores) and from New York's

Meat Packing district, which is renowned for its chic industrial beauty and the locals' mission of keeping the area's rich heritage alive. Interior designer Fons Kooymans was responsible for the layout indoors, and the Pollmanns' goal was to retain the history of the building while transforming it into a superb retail environment for the 21st century.

The new store is raw, authentic and industrial, and it displays great respect for the company's history.

"Pollmann has created a very bo-

hemian, edgy store that has a great attitude, a genuine story, and a strong, unique identity," one of the *gia* judges commented. "One word says it all: Wow! Everything is right about this business – from the modern marketing to the clear choice of an omni-channel strategy, and the focus on retaining social relevance. At a time when many shops struggle to survive, Pollmann finds 1890 is a luminous example of how to turn a future-proof idea for home cooking into a wonderful experience!"

All of these factors contribute to an amazing shopping experience. However, one of the main reasons that people shop with Pollmann, says Anke, is for the personal experience. This is something about the business that in 128 years has never changed.

"Customers come here for the people," explains Anke. "We are a shop for advice. A shop where you can touch and sample things and compare products. Our customers feel a part of a community, and they also know that they can speak to someone that they know, from the comfort of their own home, and then we deliver the products to them, and they know how to use them. If they don't, they can call us, and we can talk them through what they need to do."

Pollmann has a permanent core team of six passionate staff, and it's obvious to customers that all of them love their job. Anke and Nick ensure that everyone on their team understands everything about the business. "Our core team has been intensively involved in the process of change that we went through in the past two years, meaning that they came with us for the journey and learned alongside us," says Nick.

Employees also join Anke and Nick on trips to trade fairs so that they stay aware of changes in the industry, innovations, new products and new information that can be gained from expert talks and seminars. This focus on taking care of staff and always offering them in-store education has meant that the team is pulling in one direction. They are united in their goal to ensure that Pollmann continues to succeed, and yet



The inspiration for the store design was drawn from Eataly and Anthropologie in Chicago as well as the New York Meat Packing district, known for its chic industrial beauty.





they don't want to grow into a retail giant.

"It's better for our company to remain small and stay in control," says Nick. "Yes, the goal is always to sell more products, but there will soon be more and more pieces sold online, and our model means that we will succeed in that environment."

Pollmann's marketing and use of modern technology is something that has been so seamlessly integrated into the business that the store's heritage is not at odds with the future. In fact, this well-considered fusion of the past and the present is what gives Pollmann some of its edge, and it certainly contributes to its success.

The company collaborates closely with vloggers and bloggers to communicate with customers, sharing news of

new products, upcoming events and activities in-store. There's also an online chat platform for customers to talk to employees about products and their needs, and one of the things that customers love the most is that the products are quickly delivered to their door. That's a huge time-saver for people leading busy lives, and also a blessing for those who might not be as mobile as they once were.

"Pollmann's professional approach of treating each social media platform differently helps it to retain its relevance, connecting the store with people of all ages and demographics," said one judge on the *gia* expert jury.

Pollmann sinds 1890 is a true survivor. Not many people know that the original store was bombed in World War II, and it had to be completely created

again from the ground up. That didn't stop Nick's great grandfather, and it's obvious that the current Pollmanns are just as resilient. They embrace change and challenges as opportunities, and this puts them in good stead to not simply survive in the modern retail landscape, but to thrive. 🐦

*To learn more about Pollmann sinds 1890, visit [www.servies.nl](http://www.servies.nl).*

*For information about the *gia* (Global Innovation Awards) contact Piritta Törrö at [piritta.torro@inspiredconnection.fi](mailto:piritta.torro@inspiredconnection.fi). Additional information is also available online at [www.housewares.org/show/gia-retail](http://www.housewares.org/show/gia-retail).*

*For more information about the International Home + Housewares Show and to pre-register for the 2019 Show, taking place in Chicago on March 2-5, 2019, please visit [www.housewares.org](http://www.housewares.org).*