



The Company Farm

Our Stories - A Great Place To Do Business

Food lovers enjoy the good life



West of Wauchope, in the heartland of the Hastings, food lovers are savouring an opportunity to return to back to basics cooking.

The Company Farm is the brainchild of former IT devotee Lyn Withers who left the hectic pace of the city behind to embrace the 'good life'.

The property is nestled among bushland at Gannons Creek with the earth gently undulating down to the banks of the Hastings River.

It's a scene that forces you to stop and listen to nature as it vibrates around you, breathe in and delight in the heady aromas of fresh herbs and clean air and appreciate the brilliant simplicity of life.

The 8.2 hectare farm enjoyed humble beginnings with the first hand-sown crops placed in the ground in 1991.

"It all started with a bit of lettuce and some herbs and from there we ventured into a few other products like citrus and lemongrass and kaffir lime," Lyn explained.

"Our focus was to grow fresh organic produce and deliver a high quality product."

It wasn't long before the word was out and some of Sydney's finest restaurants were including fresh organically grown produce from Lyn's farm on their menus. Among those is one of Australia's most reputable chef's Neil Perry.

"I was lucky enough to have some contacts in the food industry in Sydney so we built upon that to get

our produce out there. They all wanted seasonal, organically grown ingredients and what we were growing here met those needs," Lyn said.

"Our biggest challenge was educating our local restaurants to include these fresh locally grown ingredients in their food."

Delivering fresh to such a diverse market year-round evolved into a labour-intensive operation that prompted Lyn to re-evaluate the direction of the business.

"We were sending most of our excess off to wholesalers so the decision was made to downsize the farm and concentrate on using what we had in the ground in a better way," she explained.



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“We had all of our citrus trees in the ground and producing fruit so I thought we should make use of them and that’s where the idea of creating our own preserved lemons and citrus marmalade came from.

“We can continue to get value out of what we’ve got here without having to plant new products.”

Cooking With Company came with that shift and so too did a focus on exposing local chefs and foodies to the benefits of organic cooking with Hastings-grown products.

“It was a logical progression to share as much as we could with the local market. I discussed the idea with chefs here and in Sydney and they all thought it was a good idea.”

And with that, Lyn welcomed aspiring chefs, food lovers and culinary amateurs into her kitchen to share her ‘back to earth’ philosophy of cooking. Cooking With Company concept is symbolic of the importance of having food prepared with love in our lives – it brings people together.

The specialised classes are open to anyone – even those who burn the toast – to share and delight in the satisfaction that comes with creating a meal from scratch with ingredients grown right at the back door.

Lyn hosts connoisseur chefs who bring their experience and delicious recipes to the classes and help participants create and consume a smorgasbord of sumptuous dishes that can easily be re-created at home.

Among those is consultant chef Diana Thompson who has worked as head chef at the Sydney Fish Markets cooking school, teaches and brings a wealth of food knowledge to each class.

Regular Thai cooking classes are led by head chef at Sailors Thai in Sydney, Air, while and vegetarian specialist Kurma Dasa delivers something unique to the Cooking With Company program.

Lyn has also hosted several trade days where local chefs are encouraged to attend to keep up-to-date with industry trends and use what they learn to add new life and enthusiasm to their own food.

With everyone from amateur home-cooks to some of the region’s best chefs visiting The Company Farm, Lyn uses it as an opportunity to showcase a range of Hastings-grown products including Cassegrains Wines, The Little Brewing Company, Yarras Olives and



Ricardoes Tomatoes to name a few. She maintains an active website and distributes an online newsletter to members with updates on new classes and the latest recipes.

“I think this region is really developing now and the Journey of Flavour program and Hastings Farmer’s Markets are great opportunities for people to promote and highlight just what we’re doing in this region,” Lyn said.

“I think we need to really focus on educating people who live in the Hastings, even our chefs, to embrace what we have here, to experience it, to bring those flavours to the food they’re cooking.

“It is hard work and this is a business that needs to grow to support and

sustain the property but we can only get bigger and better.

“I’d love for Cooking With Company to be a cooking school that is known Australia-wide and continues to attract the calibre of chefs we have already hosted.”

Lyn is on her way – she offers accommodation for group bookings and corporate events and encourages groups of friends to book and enjoy an afternoon cooking at the farm.

Her greatest satisfaction though is sitting back with a group of new friends at the end of a class, enjoying a glass of wine, overlooking the living landscape from her verandah knowing that a few more people will return home having had a taste of the good life.

Our journey:

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Lyn Withers, The Company Farm

- *The Company Farm is a proud supporter of the Customer Care Program and Journey of Flavour*



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