

Sustainable Tourism Adviser in (North Canterbury) Regions 2009 Nor'Wester Cafe Case Study, March 2010



i. Business Vision

Nor'Wester Cafe was established with the aim of creating a restaurant that would become the hub of the community - one that would endure through commitment to quality produce and the evolution of knowledge and skills.

The business is successful by all accounts; GP is competitive, there's depth to the businesses and local pride and loyalty. The focus right now is leveraging the human capital with integrity, in an industry more used to 'rape and pillage' hours and styles, hence the sustainability angle.

Sustainable tourism for the Nor'Wester is about providing an experience that is sustainable for everyone who comes into contact with it. Customers must feel that the restaurant is alive and functioning well, offering a consistence experience around food, beverages and ambience. It must be sustainable for the owners and staff to maintain, while achieving balance in their own lives. Naturally sustainable outcomes will benefit the environment, and achieve a better bottom line.

ii. Business Background

Trish and Tim are North Cantabrians who have made Amberley home together for 25years. They both became armoured with hospitality while travelling Europe in the mid '80s. Trish decided she wanted to be a business owner, to be a Really Good One, and so they bought the site (forty minutes north of Christchurch City on State Highway One in the heart of Amberley), renovated the 1920's bungalow and opened Nor'Wester Café December 1997.

The Nor'Wester dining experience can be set inside by the open fire, alfresco on the verandah, or in the courtyard. Throughout their menus, they aim for fresh uncomplicated dishes that really support the taste and texture of the great produce chosen, and that reflect the café's place in rural North Canterbury. For travellers on-route, more casual style food is available, along with a selection of delicious small goods to accompany a hot drink. The extensive beverage list includes a strong selection of fine wine from the local Waipara Valley, contrasted by wine from the rest of New Zealand and the world.

Multiple and regular awards across a diverse range of hospitality metrics satisfy most that Nor'Wester Café understands the concepts and value of wine and food partnerships, and good service.

iii. Sustainable Business Practice

Some examples:

- Established Environmental Policy and targets under the ZeroWaste framework. Posters, reminders and notices around the premises/ in the staff room regarding ZeroWaste Action Plan and progress on it (ZeroWaste has been revitalized recently although has been in place at Nor'Wester for some years)
- Sustainability is integrated into existing management systems and processes (i.e. included as a specific agenda item, built into business plans, procedures etc)
- Consistency, through developing and nurturing our culture, policies, systems, processes and work environment
- Employ local staff - the restaurant now consistently employs around 15 people, all who either live, or have come to live somewhere between the Waimakariri and Hurunui rivers
- Provide training programs (industry apprenticeships and additional skills necessary for leadership and promotion), so that local people can be phased into management positions over time

- Used fat is siphoned stored and collected by Biodiesel NZ Ltd
- Reduced use of dryer by using outdoor clothes lines for mostly air drying laundry
- A menu flexible enough to focussed on local seasonal and available produce. Buy as much seasonal and local produce as possible, and when sourcing consumables that are not produced locally (such as coffee and tea), give preference to 'fair trade' and certified organic products.
- Use blackboards and local art to celebrate and provoke positivity

iv. **Analysis of Sustainable Business Practices**

The benefit of introducing sustainable tourism practices into our business has been vast.

Economically - Reduced electricity costs by installing energy efficient bulbs, turning off lights and appliances. Reduced gas bills because of the ZeroWaste initiative which gives focus to turning off gas hobs when not in use and managing hot water usage. The same focus reduces chemical. These savings are captured and monitored through our monthly profit and loss.

Social – Our local community benefits as we use more local produce. There is a sense of pride when local growers come to the restaurant and know that their food or wine is being served. This gives them a tremendous sense of ownership and satisfaction. We continue to hire local people and grow their talents.

Environmental – Coffee grinds are returned as food for plants in our vege gardens, as well as sharing it with our customers to take to their homes or business. Waste to landfill is slashed by recycling plastics, bottles, paper etc. There is still more work to do here to creatively overcome some barriers, i.e. no local composting programme and we do not have the space ourselves to create one big enough.

v. **Assessment of the STAR programme**

The STAR programme has been very beneficial. It was very effective having our adviser come into our business to assess and to help identify areas where we could be more productive. There has been much work done in these areas around New Zealand, and it is great to get suggestions and examples of best practice. Also the contacts for accessing various products, systems etc have been invaluable.

This is an area of our business that I have wanted to focus on, with a plan for us all to work with. Work in these areas was already on the way with our own in-house ZeroWaste initiative. I now also have our STAR action plan, as well as a draft Food Safety Plan. They provide a structure to keep us focussed, outline our pathway and keep our organisation moving forward, measuring and achieving.

STAR has made this way of thinking clearer to all, and makes the point that it is all worthwhile. It has made a difference to our staff in how they think about things, and how they work.

vi. **Future plans and outlook**

Future Aspirations and Goals:

- A well cared for environment that is comfortable, relaxing and nurturing for our customers
- Continued delivery and honesty in products that reflect our place in rural NZ i.e. inspiring menus, including colour, texture, and taste through professional cooking practices
- Service that is informed, an admirable depth of knowledge around food and beverages, and front of house service formats
- A stable team of people who love what they do, enjoy their lives in this area, with incomes that sustain their needs and gives hope for their dreams
- The adjoining property is developed to include a food and wine function room that seats a max of 25 people. This can also be used for cooking classes,

coffee classes, wine tastings, catering and small community meetings. A retail area for products made on premise such as smoked items, and take home meals; also local food and wine products and a restaurant vegetable garden at the rear.

Contact Details:

Trish Coleman
Nor' Wester Cafe
95 Main North Road
Amberley
New Zealand

Phone 03 314 9411
Mobile 027 221 8984
Fax 03 315 7380
Email: info@norwestercafe.co.nz