



TOURISM

by Bill Nehmy

GOOD SPORTS

Echunga Softball enjoying 2019 season



Amelia and Damian McArdle of Chamberlain Orchards and Paracombe Premium Perry

This month I am pleased to introduce Damian McArdle from Paracombe Premium Perry and Chamberlain Orchards at Paracombe.

BN: Welcome Damian, please can we start with your early years, where you were born, went to school, your early plans and aspirations?

DM: I was born in Keith in the South East in 1983 and moved to Paracombe in 1985. I went to Paracombe primary school then to Pedare Christian College in Golden Grove. I was always in our family orchard as a kid with Dad and Grandpa, so I wanted to do that when I was older.

I left school in year 11 to complete my trade as a diesel mechanic, and worked at various places around Australia before going back on our orchard full time in 2009 and completing my qualifications in production horticulture.

BN: Please elaborate on your journey from growing Pears commercially and diversifying with cider, juice and tourism experiences.

DM: Back in 2012 I saw the push with cider brands from overseas and also our limited returns for second grade fruit. I figured that if they can do it, we could do it, and it has transitioned from there.

In the beginning we used to enter competitions to see how we sat amongst our peers and we did reasonably well. Since then I have worked tirelessly in developing our business as an agritourism destination from scratch.

We now operate our fresh fruit business growing pears as Chamberlain Orchards, as well as Paracombe Premium Perry which we offer agricultural tourism experiences, a rustic and relaxing Shed Door and we specialise in authentic sourdough wood oven

pizzas for guests to enjoy, overlooking the property where it all happens.

We are family friendly and cater for everyone.

BN: If you have visiting friends or relatives and you want to give them a memorable Adelaide Hills day, what do you recommend? Certainly the developing cluster of tourism operators in the Northern Adelaide Hills are making a big impact!

DM: I think the Northern Adelaide Hills is severely underrated. My day would be starting with a breakfast at The Cudlee Café, Babette and her team never let you down. From there, I would visit the Gorge Wildlife Park, followed by a trip to Applewood Distillery in Gumeracha and a trip to the National Motor Museum in Birdwood.

To finish off I would see Al and Rose at Lobethal Bierhaus for a cracking beer and a great dinner. If our guests had kids, I would add the Big Rocking Horse in Gumeracha, or add Kersbrook Hill Wines in too. The beauty of this region is you don't need to go far to have such diversity!

BN: What do you think is the most significant tourism opportunity waiting to be realised in the Adelaide Hills?

DM: Personally I think it is agritourism. People care where their food comes from, and international visitors are amazed at our clean and green environment, and our interaction with nature.

By offering agritourism experience people can learn what really happens to their food, they can see first hand how our environment is cared for, and they can understand the science behind what we do, such as controlled atmosphere storage of apples and pears.

Recently we had a group of guests from Singapore visit. They got to walk in our

orchard, see kangaroos, koalas and black cockatoos in their natural environment, and eat and drink the products grown on the property. That is priceless and an experience they will not forget.

BN: Please share any other key interests/activities that might surprise us including the background of how 'Perry' got its name and your 'watchdog'?

DM: I love cooking. My perfect day would be to visit the Central Markets, head home and cook up a storm such as slow cooked lamb shanks with a potato mash and sourdough chilli and olive roll and sit down with my wife Amelia to enjoy it. Close by myside would be my dog, Arashi.

He is a long coat American Akita, that kind of looks like a 65kg teddy bear. Perry originated in the UK, and perry is to pears as cider is to apples. Being pear growers we thought it was only correct to say it as it is!

BN: What advice would you give a young person in respect to finding the right career and to have an enriching life?

DM: Always be open to learning new things, and giving something a try. You will not know if you like something until you try it. Never be afraid to ask for help from anyone.

There are so many people who may not even know you, that would love to be able to help someone younger to succeed in life. They may be to help mentor you, they may teach you something, but just ask, it will cost you nothing. Lastly, whatever you do, be resilient. Nothing worthwhile is ever easy.

Thanks Damian for letting us get to know you better and a better understanding of your business. I love your pear juice with ginger!



Charlotte Ernst fires in the pitch for the Echunga Demons U13 Mixed team



Jay Searl looks to take the catch at first in an Echunga vs Hahndorf ModBall game



ModBall Coach Eliza Lovelock talks outfielder Oliver Priori through the finer points of the game



Echunga U13 Mixed big hitter Tyler Searl takes off after connecting

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