

Local Food Innovators: Herbie's Spices



With a history in the spice trade **stretching back more than 50 years**, the team behind **Herbie's Spices** has been receiving rave reviews for their range of culinary herbs, spices and unique spice blends, and best of all, they're all **developed and made on-site in Charmhaven** under the watchful eye of **owners Ian and Liz Hemphill** and **General Manager, Jason Kent**. As the team celebrates its 25 year anniversary, we caught up with Ian to get the low-down on these seriously good spices.



Herbie's is a goldmine for the Coast's food lovers: they can access hard-to-find herbs and spices, and also learn from your expertise. What do your customers love best about you?

We're a specialty artisan business that sells culinary herbs and spices and unique spice blends, and they're all developed and made on-site.

Our customers particularly love that we have high quality standards, and that we implement strict allergen controls.

We also believe in honest labelling that shows 100% of all ingredients, and all of our products lack any artificial ingredients, too.

You've been surrounded by herbs and spices since your childhood, as your parents were pioneers in the herb and spice scene in the 1950s. What are some of your most innovative ideas or processes that have helped you to stay at the top of the game?

All of the spices we provide to the hospitality industry are packed to order, which allows us to maintain their maximum freshness.

Most other suppliers have pre-packed containers, and these may be weeks (or months!) old before the restaurant or caterer receives them.

Your factory is located on Arizona Road in Charmhaven, which makes it easy for us to grab the products we need, when we need them. What do you love about being based in 'Charmie'?

Charmhaven is a great place for our business, as many of our staff live locally. Some of them have been with us for over 15 years, and we're also pleased to have some new young and enthusiastic employees on board, too.



It's so important that we all continue to support local businesses in the post-COVID environment. Do you work with any local suppliers in your day-to-day operations?

Yes - we work with a number of local suppliers, including Impressive Print at Charmhaven and photographer Hilda Bezuidenhout, and we're involved with a number of local support networks including NSW Business Chamber and Wyong Business Chamber.

The pandemic certainly caused a lot of disruption to business over the past few years. What were the biggest challenges faced by your team, and what have you done to overcome them?

Supply chain issues - and in particular, the new biosecurity regulations that have been placed on imports - have been a real challenge, especially combined with slow processing of import documents.

To overcome them, we appointed a specialist Customs Clearance Agent, and have also worked closely with Biosecurity NSW to resolve any further emerging issues.



With such an exciting range of products, we know you'll continue to go from strength to strength. What kind of support would help you to grow over the next couple of years?

For us, it's all about publicity - especially when you consider that we've been in the spice industry for over 50 years! We've also have written award-winning books on spices, and we're passionate about continuing to educate and demystify spices for consumers.

Customer referrals are always worthwhile, too... as long as they are unsolicited and not asked for!

If we could ask you to take out your crystal ball for a moment: where do you think we might see the Coast's hospitality industry heading in five years' time, and what do you think it could mean for your products?

We believe in the Central Coast, and as part of that commitment I am the Chairperson of the Central Coast Industry Connect Board, and the Central Coast Food Alliance, which has been a key driver of the Central Coast Maker's Trail. These organisations are making an enormous contribution to promoting manufacturing and tourism on the Central Coast through practical activities, and I encourage all manufacturers to become members.




Through supporting CCIC, manufacturers and food businesses will benefit from the development of a greater range of sustainable food manufacturing, as well as more restaurants and caterers using local produce and ingredients.

This will also mean the provision of more diverse cuisines, including more Australian native herbs and spices in local offerings. It's not necessarily 'bush tucker', but greater use of these flavours for their own attributes, such as lemon myrtle in a laksa soup, or native pepperberry in a winter casserole, adds interest and excitement to what we have on offer.



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