



# OPENING THE GATE

Inspiring producers to pursue growth by sharing of local success stories

## Basils Farm



Since its humble beginnings as a cellar door in 2013, Basils Farm has endeavoured to grow its services, facilities and activities to attract a broader audience. From the wine, to the extensive permaculture garden and the picturesque location (which provides stunning panoramic views of Swan Bay), Basils Farm offers something for everyone.

Basils Farm Sales Manager Ben Shaw came on board in the early days and started Basils' potager, which is now one of the business' biggest drawcards. A year into business, the garden formed a big part of the decision to invest heavily in developing and expanding the property's offerings. The main goal of the expansion? Get people through the door. After that, the Basils Farm team knew that the unique experience would ensure the visitors kept coming back. "We knew that there's about 50 wineries in the region so we knew that we needed to do something different and more diverse. The garden started out as just making something that was interesting for people to come and see. At that time food was just going nuts and I knew that was happening and thought this could be a good

point of difference for us. I've been in wine for fifteen years and I knew that you can't just be a winery," says Ben.

With a business strategy focused on diversification of product and experience, what started as a cellar door has gone on to become a leading tourist destination on the Bellarine Peninsula. But you can't rely on the tourist market 12 months of the year, and brand has been critical in drawing a broad customer base to the Farm, including many locals, year-round.

Farm Manager Igor and his team drive the vision of sustainability by using biological farming practices such as permaculture gardening, producing quality, organic produce for the Café.

General Manager Kim Dema says the business "relies heavily on word of mouth and editorial. By offering something different like using local suppliers and growing our own produce, it makes us attractive to the local advertising groups to write up a story".





*“Promote only what you believe in.”*

After identifying that their market was struggling to build familiarity with their original name, the business rebranded from Kiltynane Wines to Basils Farm. The strategic ‘farm’ reference identified the expanded offerings of the business in the minds of their market, and furthered Basils Farm’s ambition to be recognised as providing a holistic experience for their customers.

While wine is—and always will be—at the heart of the business, adopting sustainable farming practices is a significant part of the vision for the property. In addition to growing the extensive, organic edible garden, plans include the expansion of market gardens and orchards, adding more chickens and introducing llamas, baby doll sheep, chickens and ducks to the property.

When asked if Basils is a place for foodies, Ben replied, “How do you define foodies? Some people want to take photos of their food, and others are just excited to see where their food comes from. We’re trying to attract people who like gardening, who like food, who like wine. It’s a pretty obvious combo, really”. Head Chef / Café Manager Greg and his team are focused on providing a great customer experience. Customers can walk around the food gardens, looking at where their lunch has come from.



## HIGHLIGHTS:

- 1 Expand offerings to get people in the door; create an experience to get people to return.
- 2 Use a spread of marketing channels and ensure the audience is reached.
- 3 Find a point of difference, a unique selling point – set yourself apart.
- 4 Match staff to the business values and let them promote the business through their work.
- 5 Be authentic, provide quality and don’t compromise the brand.



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## “Find staff that believe in your business vision.”

In only its second summer with a full kitchen, the team at Basils has experienced a big growth spurt in a short period of time. To help get the word out about Basils Farm to as many people as possible—locals, tourists and Melbourne day trippers—the business uses a spread of marketing channels, and credits editorial and word of mouth as their most effective marketing tools. The uniqueness of their location and the potager help garner editorial in local publications, including the Bellarine Times and Surf Coast Times.

Basils’ top tip? “Promote only what you believe in and are actually doing; don’t pretend to be something you are not. Find staff that believe in your business vision because they are the best promoters of any business”, says Kim.

The Farm also invests in print advertisements in local papers and tourist publications, including the recent Flavours of Victoria book, as well as keeping their online listings on sites like Trip Advisor detailed and up-to-date. Their spread of marketing channels extends to include Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts, with the latter providing the most traction for the business.

The Farm uses their unique selling points to create content for their Instagram account. As a visual medium, Instagram allows Basils Farm to transparently communicate their values, and everything that they love about what they do and their location. With a customer base interested in knowing where

their produce comes from, this is a perfectly-matched medium for the business.

Kim has identified that building a social presence on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter has given Basils the opportunity to directly market to the people who are most interested. “It’s amazing how many times a post is shared amongst friends, creating new likes to our social accounts. It is important to keep the posts short – a great photo, followed by a few words about something new being offered.”

Maintaining a manageable scale has meant that Basils Farm can continue to focus on simplicity, can remain relaxed, unpretentious and affordable, and does not need to turn walk-in customers away due to too many bookings. That’s not to say it isn’t a challenge, but staying authentic is something that Basils will not compromise on. “Be authentic. If you are talking about food, people are really aware of where their food is coming from these days. The local movement is strong, so you can’t compromise, like making a chutney with tomatoes from Queensland and passing it off as local,” says Ben.

Basils’ advice to other local agribusinesses looking to expand? Have a unique selling point and focus on that. Offer products of good quality and back them up with great customer service. But most importantly, do something different and set yourself apart from everyone else, and actively promote your best selling points.



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