

A Front Paddock just perfect for grazing



Drover's daughter: Cheyanne Ainsworth has been overwhelmed by the response to the Front Paddock Cafe and Larder which she and her husband Chris recently opened in Derrinallum.

By Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] W
[/dropcap]hen a groovy cafe with fantastic food opens on the main street of a small country town that happens to be enroute to Melbourne, you might expect a steady trade.

But nothing – not even a former career as an international flight attendant with Qantas – could prepare **Cheyanne Ainsworth** and her husband **Chris** for the phenomenal response to their venture, **Front Paddock Cafe & Larder**, which opened

about eight weeks ago in what passes for downtown Derrinallum.

The town officially has a population of around 500, but many, many more than that pass through each day on their way to or from Melbourne and, up until now, it has been a long drive between delicious food and brewed coffees.

“It has been amazing,” Cheyanne says in between serving customers. “My friends say, ‘what did you expect?’ and I didn’t imagine this.”

Soon after opening, the cafe – which offers breakfast, lunch and dinner – was selling out of its entire supply of gourmet sandwiches, rolls, cakes (brought in from the cake capital, St Kilda, no less), pies and generously proportioned sausage rolls which have quickly gained a cult following.

Even during our visit last week, a backpacking cyclist wandered in, put his hands on the counter, smiled and said “I’m hungry and I have been told this is the place to come.”



Chris and Cheyanne Ainsworth taking a rare breather in their cafe. The pair also run a mixed farm at

Derrinallum which means life is definitely never dull.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] O
[/dropcap]f course a memorable cafe also needs style, character and atmosphere and this is where Cheyanne's family history comes into play.

Her father, Bob, who occasionally drops in to help with the dishes, was a drover and Cheyanne is affectionately known as "DD" – drover's daughter.

This strong rural connection is reflected not only in the name of the cafe – more about that shortly – but the beautiful fittings, including several wool classing tables bought at a clearing sale, that have been topped with glass and are used for shared dining and larger groups.

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There are also salvaged saleyard signs and the inspired use of a bookmaker's board where the tote prices reflect the coffee prices – except where Cheyanne has added "50 cents" because the old tote prices didn't have that option.

"A lot of what you see here comes from people who Dad has known for years," she explains.

Chris, who is a registered builder and bricklayer but also has a background in running family hotels, put the whole space together in what was previously an old butcher shop.



The communal table – an up-styled wool classing table bought at a clearing sale – is one of the many unique features in the cafe. Image: Front Paddock Cafe & Larder.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] I [/dropcap]f life wasn't busy enough for the pair, Cheyanne and Chris have continued to work a mixed farm with "Bob the drover", who manages both his own property and theirs.

So when they are not working in the Front Paddock, they could be working in the *other* front paddock – their Derrinallum property which carries Berkshire pigs, lamb and beef.

"By the end of the year we hope that all beef, lamb and pork served on the table is from our farm," Cheyanne says.

"It has all happened at once, but we got to the point where we thought life was too short not to do what we have wanted to do

for a long time.”

Which brings us to the name of the cafe.

The pair had hoped to call it the Long Paddock – a droving term – but so many ventures were already using that name that they instead opted for the Front Paddock.

“The front paddock is your best paddock, the one that everyone sees, so it works,” Cheyanne says.

Judging by the response so far, this is one front paddock that is perfect for happy grazing.



The recycled bookmaker's board that is perfect for pricing coffees, made with “Ruby” the espresso machine. Image: *Bluestone Magazine*

[box]The Front Paddock Cafe & Larder is at 24 Main St, Derrinallum. Open for breakfast and lunch every day, but closed on Tuesday. Dinner is available Thursday-Sunday nights. Bookings: (03) 5597 6880 [Find them on Facebook here.](#) The cafe is finalist in the 2015 Savour Australia Restaurant & Catering Awards in the category of New Restaurant – Victoria Regional.[/box]

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