

LYNWOOD

Media Announcement. 25 August 2009

Collector's iconic Lynwood Café closes.

On a Sunday morning Lynwood Café in Collector is buzzing. The regulars are there, local families with young children, the parents sharing small town gossip while the kids are outside kicking a ball around the stone walled garden. The room becomes a riot of fluoro coloured Lycra as the bike rack outside fills and cyclists from Canberra and Goulburn squeak in on their trendy bike shoes. Outside there's a few 4WDs with skis on their pack racks heading for the snow fields, reminding you that it's winter. That's if the cold wind that sweeps across the Federal Highway from Lake George hadn't. But inside the open fires seem to add warmth to everyone's conversation, and you're reminded that this has been a popular stop on snow season weekends, for ten years. More than that, the 'Lynwood Cafe' is an institution, a country destination where all year round the food and coffee is good, and the Lynwood Preserves, Robbie Howard's hand made jams and preserves just walk out the door as people leave.

But this Sunday August 30, will be different. When the doors close, the knee rugs are folded and the gas heaters shut down on the enclosed front verandah, Lynwood Café is closing and being advertised for sale. The Howard's - Alan and Robbie and their son Robert Broadbent, and his wife Kats, all say they feel the need to move on.

It won't be easy; you can see Robbie's eyes moisten when she talks about giving up that 'special piece of ground', the long low 1830's building that she fell in love with in 1999. It was once one of the early settlers' homes, situated just near the bridge that forms an entrance to the town. The view of the tree-lined creek and lagoon and open paddocks beyond still make it a special country place. It was here that Robbie had a showcase vegetable garden (before it was trendy to have a restaurant garden), and the many fruit trees that have survived the drought years still supply produce that she uses in her jams.

The café was named after the Howard's nearby country property 'Lynwood,' on the edge of town. That will remain 'home' as Robbie and Alan both look forward to a time when they can indulge in more travelling overseas. Alan mentioned a cooking class they attended in the Greek Islands that added a couple of dishes to Robbie's repertoire at home, "and that great Greek hang-over cure", a soupy dish of lamb and goat that the locals swore was a recovery tonic. That's the kind of experience they're both looking forward to. Alan has been illustrating the food columns that Robbie writes and, with a smile, says he fancies some time to become a travel photographer. Rather than turning their backs, it seems that they both want to have more and wider food experiences, and Robbie talks about 'staying involved with the food industry'. Robert, who has managed Lynwood Café for the last three years and guided it through a changing kitchen guard, holding it true to Lynwood's considerable reputation, is also determined to take his expertise to a wider world.

All of them are quick to say that Collector, the town and the surrounding district is doing 'very well thank you'. There are now many more good regional producers, local olive groves, a good local pub, a store, gallery and there's soon to be a new gourmet pie shop. The nearby wineries are also lifting the region's profile, Alex McKay has his own Collector label and there's Lerida Estate and Lake George Winery just a few minutes along the highway.

The annual Collector Pumpkin Festival has continued to draw huge crowds, which, while they'd be too modest to admit it, is due to the ground work that all the Howard clan did in its formative years. The busy local primary school is evidence of the number of young families that have moved into the area, a sure sign of growth. The Howard's would love to see the café continue and offer to work to transfer what they've learnt to any new owner who needed their help.

Leaving now, at the end of winter, as the plum blossom catches the sun at the café entrance and when there's green shoots on the willows at the creek edge (and even water in the creek), is maybe the right time. Not that it will make it any easier for any of them. The difficult process now begins of notifying and thanking the many people who supported them over the years, and especially the staff who became part of 'the family', most of whom also loved this special place.

Fred Harden.
Regional Food Australia.

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More background material is available and press quality images of Alan and Robbie Howard can be downloaded from the Lynwood Café website www.lynwoodcafe.com

Lynwood Café is located in the village of Collector, New South Wales, just 2 minutes off the Federal Highway. Situated north of Lake George and 20 minutes south of Goulburn, Lynwood Café is an easy 45 minute drive from Canberra, or a two and a half hour trip from Sydney.