

southern highlands
snapshot
magazine

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**Racing prodigy
hails from the
Highlands**

**Play it safe
by the pool**

**Get to the core
with Pilates**

APPLE THIEF

cider rules





editor's comments

The talent, drive and achievements of the people of the Southern Highlands never ceases to amaze me. And these qualities are not just confined to sporting and artistic circles.

This month's cover story takes a look at the innovative and determined efforts of two local businessmen who have turned the humble apple into the toast of the town in the form of apple cider. They have made certain that the sparkling treat has not gone unnoticed elsewhere as they hit the pavements of Sydney to successfully sell their product to leading city outlets while also attracting overseas interest.

The inside story is equally inspiring with a focus on the Highlands-based race horse, Streama, which is proving a winning force on the race track, coming out on top in four of its last eight races.

Tips on liver cleansing in the Health and Wellbeing section of the magazine aims to offer advice for anyone keen for a spring health boost, changing trends in gardening is the focus of Highlands garden, while Home Grown showcases the creative drive of Heidi garden art.

Other regular features include a look at the benefits of Pilates in Time of your life, junior cricket in Young stars and tips on what to do during the month of November in What's on. Happy reading!

Jackie Meyers, editor

southern highlands snapshot magazine

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How do you like them apples?

If you had walked down Pitt Street in Sydney over the past few months, some friendly and familiar Southern Highlands faces would have greeted you warmly, armed with a crate of Pink Lady apples and bottles of cider.

Dave Purcell and Charlie Ostaszewski are the entrepreneurial local boys who have stepped into the burgeoning cider market and are making a name for themselves locally and in some impressive on-premise outlets in the city.

The two friends met while holidaying in Thailand two years ago, while Charlie was traveling the world and Dave was taking a well-earned break from his business, managing vineyards in the Highlands.

Dave grew up on an apple orchard in Batlow where he spent much of his time playing on the property with his two brothers.

He moved to the Southern Highlands eight years ago, where his vineyard management business has kept him busy and has grown into a much-respected entity in the region.

Dave has kept up his involvement with his parent's apple farm and has always been plagued by the knowledge that the fruit grading system dismisses apples that have small blemishes, no matter how sweet and juicy they are.

As the old adage goes, "millions saw the apple fall from the tree, only Isaac Newton asked why."

It could very well have been Dave and Charlie who asked why and turned their query into a thriving business.

"I couldn't stand to see the waste. Apples



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lying on the ground or still on trees because of a small mark or bruise, when inside they were the most delicious fruit you could taste," Dave said.

Dave's connections within the wine industry afforded him the opportunity to process an initial batch of apple cider, made from Pink Lady apples.

The reaction of friends and family who tasted the cider was enough to set Dave on the path to creating a brand and subsequent business of his apple cider.

Enter one Charlie Ostaszewski.

Charlie is a born and bred Londoner with a passion for travel and life in general.

His Chartered Accountancy background has given this partnership the commercial steering it needs going forward.

A name for the apple cider was created by Dave's dislike of birds who steal his precious fruit out of the apple orchards.

"Apple Thief came about from my years of watching the birds get at the fruit," he said.

This whimsical slant and unusual name have given the brand the quirkiness and stand-out

quality that is causing a stir in pubs, restaurants, hotels and bars around the country.

With an accountant's eye for detail, Charlie set about raising funds to get Apple Thief off the ground.

"I found out that the Business Enterprise Centre (BEC) supported small business, and through their advice was able to put together a reasonable business plan to approach with which to approach the bank," Charlie said.

Once submitted, the plan impressed bank management so much it is now being used as a model for other businesses.

"The BEC scheme is great for small business," Charlie said. "We are entering a huge market and will need all the resources we can get."

Not that these two entrepreneurs are in anyway daunted by the prospect of what is ahead of them.

Their simple sales and marketing plan is to keep everything on a shoe-string budget and grow the brand through honest hard work.

Their customers in Sydney have all been taken in by the sight of two country boys, a long way from home, armed with a crate of Apple Thief Cider and a bag of Pink Lady apples.

Turning heads in Pitt Street, Charlie and Dave have charmed their way into some of the most sought-after outlets, with their simple and sincere manner.

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"We are different from all the other apple cider brands. Apple Thief is a home-grown product from a country town created by people who like to build relationships with their clients," Dave said.

Already the cider is placed in more than 30 outlets in Sydney and the Southern Highlands with some of their customers using 10 cases a week.

After only a few months of launching their product into the market, Dave and Charlie have learnt that they are finalists in the respected Australian Liquor Industry Awards.

A chance meeting with Heston Blumenthal's restaurant manager in London, has now created an interest in the product in the UK.

The cider itself is unique in taste. Natural and authentic with a crisp apple taste, Apple Thief cider is fruit-driven, which sets it apart from the drier styles on the market.

The Apple Thief range will soon expand to other apple varieties, such as Granny Smith and Red Delicious, making the ciders great accompaniment to food.

"We discovered that the Pink Lady went

really well with Thai food, and further experiments have shown just how versatile our cider really is," Charlie said.

Charlie and Dave's passion and enthusiasm for their business, coupled with their love of the Southern Highlands is key to their success.

Clearly enjoying every minute of the journey, these two Southern Highlanders are on their way to the top.

**Contact: Charlie on 0449 044 890,
Dave on 0419 206 359 or
www.applethief.com.au**



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