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Cuisine & Dining Out

Real food for everyday life...



Louise Bentley of the Akaroa Cooking School with local fisherman Murph.



Cooking demonstration at Canterbury Farmers' Market at Riccarton House.

The Banks Peninsula has such an abundant array of produce due to its rich soils and unique microclimate. Local salmon, lamb, beef and mussels to name a few as well as great local cheeses, olive oil, nuts, fruit and veges.

You may have seen Tamati Coffey, TVNZ Breakfast's roving reporter and weather presenter, enjoying some freshly hot smoked salmon, free range eggs on toasted ciabatta and other local seafood delights on the end of the Akaroa wharf recently. The couple who whizzed up those mouthwatering delights are the owners of The Akaroa Cooking School which opens its doors for its first class on November 14.

The School is the vision of Anthony and Louise Bentley. "It is a venture designed to encompass all we enjoy in life including, sourcing quality local ingredients, meeting new people, teaching them how to cook fabulous gourmet dishes and providing a great lifestyle for our family. We plan to develop the Akaroa Cooking School into a successful business that is an integral part of the Banks Peninsula community."

The school will offer customers a fun filled day of cooking demonstrations peppered with local history and information about the Banks Peninsula followed by a three-course meal with matching local wines around the school's large dining table. On top of regular demonstrations will be specialty courses such as the ultimate BBQ, cheese making, bread making, cake decorating, preserves and chutneys. Guest chefs will also feature throughout the year.

"We chose Akaroa for a number of reasons", says Lou who was born and raised on a farm in Oxford, North Canterbury. "The Banks Peninsula has such an abundant array of produce due to its rich soils and unique microclimate. Local salmon, lamb, beef and mussels to name a few as well as great local cheeses, olive oil, nuts, fruit and veges. With it's proximity to the ocean local seafood will often feature on the menu. Our aim is to showcase what the Banks Peninsula has to

offer and tie in with the historical French connection."

The Akaroa Cooking School is located directly opposite the main wharf in the Village Inn complex in the site of a former café. "Securing this location was a real coup for us" says Anthony. "Not only is the layout ideal for the school but the proximity to the sea and main wharf will ensure maximum exposure for the business". 'Murph' the local fisherman will be supplying freshly caught fish directly off the wharf so it won't get any fresher than that.

Lou was trained through the New Zealand School of Food & Wine and has had many hours experience in the kitchen both in New Zealand and in the UK. Restaurants in New Zealand include Hays working alongside



Mussels on the half shell

Celia Hay and in the catering industry at White Tie with Tina Duncan. In London Lou worked at the renowned Bankside restaurant and bar Zacudia from its inception and was instrumental in establishing the menu and getting the kitchen up and running. "After three great years of being a full time mum," says Lou, "I'm really looking forward to getting stuck into a new venture".

Anthony will draw on his commerce degree in Tourism Marketing and plans to take a more managerial rather than operational role in the business. "I'm really excited about building relationships with our suppliers who I see as real partners. Their local knowledge and ideas will be invaluable for us in choosing produce and recipes for the school."



Smoked salmon crostini