



Homestyle cakes a recipe for success

Description



Gina Walker and Jill Ellis get into the spirit of Christmas at Cafe Connect: a cafe where the cakes and slices are just like your Mum used to make. (If you were lucky enough!)

There is a fair chance that among all of the thousands of cafe reviews ever written, very few have featured a cafe inside a nursing home.

“A what?” we hear you say.

Yes – a nursing home. And the particular nursing home in question is the largest and oldest in Warrnambool – Lyndoch – where **Cafe Connect** has just celebrated its first birthday.

Whether we like it or not, most of us will have some connection to a nursing home at some point in our lives, either as a resident, a visitor, or even as a staff member, and Cafe Connect manages to connect with all three groups.

The key to its raging success – and it is incredibly successful – is that it operates as a regular cafe where anybody is welcome to drop in for a coffee and a cake, or something savoury, and the quality is outstanding.



People who remember **Conn's Cakes** in Timor St, Warrnambool, will think that **Rex Conn** himself has returned to make sensational cream sponges (with *real* cream), jelly cakes, hedgehog, caramel slice, peppermint slice, apple charlottes, fruit cake, chocolate cake (are you drooling yet?), cupcakes, Anzac biscuits and passionfruit slice...and that is only some of the ever-changing selection available at very reasonable prices.

The cooking is all done on the premises by three talented and cheerful women who share the role – **Jill Ellis, Gina Walker** and **Madeline Boyle** – but Gina and Madeline happily nominate Jill as the driving force.

“Her cooking is just amazing,” says Gina.

Even more amazing is that Jill, who worked many years ago at the now defunct Echo's cafe in Liebig St, never uses a recipe. Instead, she has a feel for what works and remembers the combinations in her head.

The choice of treats is also a deliberate throw-back to the past.

“I think one of the reasons that the cakes are so popular is that they remind people of the cakes and slices they enjoyed when they were younger,” Jill says.



The nostalgia doesn't stop there. People also enjoy the sights, smells and sounds of cooking in the kitchen.

"One day I had the mixmaster going and I apologised to a customer about the noise and she said, 'no, keep it going, because it reminds me of my Mum when she was in the kitchen and she always had the mixmaster going,'" Jill laughs.

Cafe Connect, which was funded by Lyndoch's annual community raffle and other community events, has become a vibrant, colourful hub to Lyndoch and, because it is located right in the main entrance, the general public are also able to wander in – and they do. (At least one member of *Bluestone Magazine* is known to drop in regularly, just to see what slices might be fresh out of the oven.)

In recognition of their success, Jill, Gina and Madeline recently received one of only two Excellence and Innovation Awards awarded annually by Lyndoch. Jill has also been inspired to become a chef and is studying for her qualification...but we secretly hope she still doesn't stick to any recipe.



Madeline Boyle is the third member of the Cafe Connect team and keeps the friendly vibe going across the weekend.

Cafe Connect, Lyndoch, Hopkins Rd, Warrnambool, is open seven days a week.



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