Five-star pedigree behind pantry door

Alice and Andy Hall, together with their children Daisy and George, have set down their roots in Killarney to run The Pantry Door at Basalt.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] P [/dropcap]astry chef **Andy Hall** has the sort of five-star resume to be a cliched, arrogant chef that we have come to know via "reality" television, but instead he has gone 360 degrees in the other direction.

Despite having previously working in not one, but two, Michelin-starred restaurants in the UK (The Vineyard at Stockcross and Le Manoir Aux Quat'Saisons) and stints at Vue De Monde, in Melbourne, and the Royal Mail Hotel, in Dunkeld, Andy's feet are planted firmly on the ground.

For starters, he lives and works at Killarney, between Port Fairy and Warrnambool.

For seconds, he now runs a small, country style cafe/restaurant – **The Pantry Door at Basalt** – with his wife, **Alice**.

And for main, he has two small children, **Daisy** and **George**, that dictate his priorities and give him every reason not to return to the "madness" of five-star hospitality.

"I no longer wanted to be doing the 17-hour days that you have to do when working at that high level," Andy says.

"I was happy to do those hard yards before I was settled, but things are very different now."

The Pantry Door lives up to its name by offering a range of gourmet, home-made products to take home.

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[/dropcap]life began to change for Andy, who is originally from the UK, when he was invited by his friend, chef **Cameron Goad** (who was in charge before **Dan Hunter**) to join him at the Royal Mail Hotel which, at that time, still had the feel of an upmarket country pub.

Prior to taking up the Royal Mail position in 2006, Andy had already begun to back away from the intensity of the restaurant life by working in Port Douglas as a snorkelling instructor. He decided, however, to take up the offer from his friend.

Alice, from Hamilton, was working in the office.

“I was actually a nurse, but taking some time out and working at the Royal Mail – and that’s how I met Andy,” Alice explains, before having to duck out to meet the gardener who has turned up to discuss their vege patch.

The restaurant has a touch of class while still making people feel at home in the beautiful weatherboard building.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] T [/dropcap]he pair married in 2009 and explored different adventures, including 12 months overseas, before Alice's connections to south-west Victoria (which include her family's old beach shack at Port Fairy, where she spent many summers) eventually saw them invited to take over the restaurant at the Basalt winery.

"(Chef) **Chris Grace** had set up the original restaurant at Basalt and he was ready to move on, so (owner) **Shane Clancey**, asked us if we would like to take over the lease and do our own thing with it," Andy explains.

The opportunity was too good to refuse and the pair opened their business in December 2012, the same week their first child, Daisy, was born.

Almost 18 months on, the **Pantry Door at Basalt** has established itself as a popular place for breakfast and lunch, but also, as its name suggests, a pantry that sells Andy's home-made preserves, sauces, dressings and a range of other delicacies.

The couple has also recently introduced cooking classes, including those specifically for men, and is building its reputation as a gallery space for local artists.

"It was madness at times – when we were starting out – but we didn't want to get to 80 and wish that we had taken the chance to run our own place," Alice says.

Fresh apple tarts made from home-grown apples. Andy's background is as a speciality pastry chef. Yum.

[box type="bio"] **The Pantry Door at Basalt, 1131 Princes Highway, Killarney, is open for breakfast and lunch Wed-Sun. P: (03) 5568 7442. You can also find them on Facebook.** [/box]

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