



Where it all started...

Let us tell you a story of a region struggling to find its identity, a beautiful place, a region that shares a name with a town west of Sydney and regularly people say, “Camden Haven? That near Picton?” The angst! How do we put ourselves on the map? It’s a well-guarded secret haven where a few people spend relaxing holidays, fishing, boating, camping – but who are we beyond a little holiday hamlet, a former fishing and timber town? Who are we now?

A small band of volunteers got together in 2008 with the backing of the Camden Haven Chamber of Commerce to pull together an event to showcase the region. We have a beautiful location and gourmet producers are establishing themselves in the region. Why not try a food and wine festival? Sure, it’s never been done before here but... let’s wing it.

Our vision is to develop an identity for the Camden Haven region and improve awareness, desirability and perceived value for the region. We want to secure a strategic market position on the Mid North Coast of NSW for relaxed, friendly, gourmet lifestyle. We will structure and stage an individual, sustainable and superior gourmet/lifestyle event, provide an experience and an opportunity to showcase and celebrate local, produce, products, talents and icons. A professional, safe, comfortable, wholesome, festive experience with **“a dollop of indulgence and a dash of quirky”**.

Local producers and restaurants supported the inaugural event – the Slice of Haven Food and Wine Festival. Excellent. How many people are actually going to come?

In 2008 just over 1,500 people supported “buying local” and seeing what’s on offer on their doorstep. Not bad for a region of 10,000 people, we thought.

In 2009 more local chefs and producers supported the event, some working together to create dishes passed among the crowd on silver platters. Around **6,000** people grabbed a “Slice” of the good life. The committee threw down a challenge for all stallholders to source 90 per cent of their food from within a 60 food mile radius. Surveys from the crowd showed people were astounded by the talent, produce and quality of food and wine on offer. The sense of brotherhood amongst stallholders was inspiring. People kicked back with satisfied bellies, a glass of local wine or beer and stayed for smooth grooves from local musicians. So we came up with one of our catch-phrases – **“Come because it tastes good, stay because it feels good”**.

In 2010, over 80 stallholders and **10,000** people braved a day of inclement weather to experience and taste their “Slice” of the Haven. In 2011 **14,500** locals and visitors descended on the gourmet feast. With a fabulous new theme to challenge stallholders, Slice of Haven 2012 promises to be bigger and better...



Aiming High....

The success of the 2009 Food & Wine Festival saw the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council approach the Slice of Haven team to stage an event leading up to their Tastings of the Hastings Festival. So let's aim for the summit, we thought, of the greatest natural asset the Camden Haven has to offer – North Brother Mountain. Whether looking north to the vineyards, south to the estuaries, west to the orchards or east to the rivers, we are surrounded by local produce of superior quality and superior chefs to match.

This location is in the heart of Dooragan National Park with views to Port Macquarie and beyond to the north and Harrington in the south. Perfect. The perfect location for a white-tie Sunday brunch!

Minor details – no electricity, no water, no shelter.

Our volunteer team worked with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to keep the location naturally beautiful. We catered for 72 paying guests at \$80 per head, however it was and remains a non-profit event. The five chefs who met the challenge of the location created dishes which told the story of the region, both modern and indigenous – all locally grown. They received a standing ovation from our guests who dined on seven courses. These chefs all came from different restaurants all over the Camden Haven. They had never worked together before, let alone without water or power! They also stretched their talents... for free. It was a tribute to the phrase that pressure produces diamonds.

In 2010, due to popular demand, the North Brother Brunch was once again held as part of the Tastings of the Hastings Festival, however as our additional goal was to invite journalists, travel writers and politicians to experience the Camden Haven, our ticket numbers were limited – and we were inundated with expressions of interest in the 2010 event.

To allocate the 80 seats fairly, we conducted a ballot ticket system, whereby expressions of interest were invited two months prior to the event. A ballot draw was conducted one month prior to the event for 6 tables of 6 guests at a cost of \$720 per table. The remaining tickets were allocated on a complimentary basis to media and VIP guests.



What's on the menu ahead...

In addition to stallholder fees, the *Slice of Haven Food and Wine Festival* is funded through local business sponsorship, Chamber of Commerce support, and Community Grants. The event is not for profit with all proceeds going towards running of the event. All labour, management and co-ordination is voluntary.

Designed as an opportunity to showcase and celebrate local produce, products, talents and icons the Festival has four main objectives:

1. Provide a showcase event for local food and wine producers and providers.
2. Challenge stallholders to source 90% of produce from a 60 "food" mile radius.
3. Provide a focal event for community engagement and development.
4. Increase the number of domestic overnight culinary visitors to the area.

The *Slice of Haven Food & Wine Festival* is also the first officially endorsed event in the Port Macquarie Hastings Journey of Flavour program, however while the event is promoted via Greater Port Macquarie Tourism event calendars, the support of Council does not extend to funding other than via Community Grants when applications are successful.

Our greatest challenge moving forward is to expand our media reach to Sydney and interstate 'foodies'. Again, with our limited budget we are trying to best allocate our funds to reach direct media targets. An example of thinking "outside the box" is to conduct our Brunch on top of the Mountain and invite key VIPs, celebrities and media.

We are fortunate to have a close relationship with local media, print, radio and TV and have managed to secure strong media presence in the local area both during the lead up to the event, and on the day of the event itself.

Our local State and Federal MPs are also very supportive and are working with us to "sell" the region to a wider audience. The Festival was presented to the Parliament of NSW during the Legislative Assembly on 1st June 2010 by then local MP Peter Besseling. The Festival has been labelled as a fantastic community celebration continuing the tradition of hosting great events in our region.

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