



A right old royal recipe

Story cooked up by Mandy Thane (who's held up a bar or two in her time)

INGREDIENTS:

One Generous Serve:
 Diesel Mechanic / Musician / Father
 One Fresh & Feisty:
 Office Worker / Pool Player / Karaoke
 Singer / Pregnant Mother
 One Mature and Well-Seasoned:
 Semi-Retired Self-Employed Elec-
 trician / Grandfather
 One Very Large Portion:
 Wise Maternal Glue
 For Flavour:
 Jazmin — the two year old
 and for an extra kick:
 A baby boy on the way.
 MIX THOROUGHLY and leave brew
 for nine months . . .

THE BELL FAMILY came to Braidwood last July to take up management of the Royal Mail Hotel. In these nine months they have faced many challenges, not only in the actual running of a pub that had gone downhill and in need of a facelift, but in relocating to and settling in a new town, and working together as an extended family for the first time. Family members: Jarrod Bell (licensee), his partner Michelle Saffell and children Jazmin and Jaxon, his parents Kevin and Dianne Bell had been searching for business opportunities for a while. Jarrod is a generous serving indeed, both in stature and nature — a good combo when it comes to running a pub. “I worked hard for a long time in

Sydney as a truck diesel mechanic and even tried to branch out on my own but in the end I just got sick of working ‘for the man’ and from hand to mouth.” Feisty Michelle — his long-time partner, has worked and lived all over the country because her father didn’t like being in one place for too long, is easy going and nothing really fazes her. They met through their mutual enjoyment of the pub culture at a karaoke night. She is a natural behind the bar and around the pool table. She loves belting out a bit of karaoke. Jarrod, too, is into karaoke and is an accomplished musician. Michelle says, “We talked about relocating soon after Jazmin was born. We wanted her to grow up in a country

town, where we didn’t want bars on the windows or guard dogs.” Around the same time that Jarrod was becoming disgruntled with city living, his parents were about to retire from their successful electrician business. They were thinking about setting up another business with the view that Jarrod and Michelle could run it — while they enjoyed semi-retirement at their beach house on the South Coast. Well, it hasn’t quite worked out like that. Kevin and Dianne are integral members of the Royal team. Jarrod, Michelle, Kev and Dianne all put in 100%+ into this hotel. They are very focussed on ensuring the Royal is something they can be proud of, and that it is somewhere the Braidwood community and tourists alike can come and enjoy.

Jarrod puts in a 14 hour shift most days. Michelle’s presence in the pub has lessened now they have two kids — but is still on call whenever needed. In her last weeks of pregnancy with Jax, she was in frantic nesting mode — on her knees scrubbing anything and everything. She does a lot of admin stuff, in conjunction with Jarrod.

Kev and Dianne keep the other end of the candle burning. Up early, they spend most of the day organising the kitchen and cellar, babysitting Jaz and Jax when required, as well as maintenance and dealing with staff. Kev, behind the bar, is also a natural — equal measures of wit, humour, sarcasm and wisdom (coupled with a good dose of wind-up).

Dianne is the glue. She studied business management and applied it successfully to the electrical business. At the Royal, it’s her recipes and expertise that keeps the kitchen running smoothly. The kitchen is open from 6am for overnight guests, to late for those with the munchies after a few too many, and everything in between. A favourite with locals and visitors alike are her homemade pies and roasts. Fans of the big hearty meal, all food that leaves the kitchen has to pass the ‘Bell’ test — good food for a good price.

Jarrod and Michelle both agree that, “working with family is extremely rewarding but can be challenging as well. We now take two days off per fortnight to spend quality time as a family — usually at mum and dad’s beach house” (they laugh). Dianne and Kev also retreat to the seaside whenever possible.

“This has helped ease what amounts to very little tension that has developed since we have joined forces in

this endeavour. It also helps that we don’t live together.” Kev and Dianne reside in the pub, Jarrod and Michelle have a house in the town.

The family is united in their goals for the Royal. They have established definitive roles and expectations of each other.

“However, sometimes you just have to let off steam and those around you cop it, but we all know this and try not to take it personally,” says Jarrod.

The Royal Mail (the ‘Mail’ was added after it was renamed for the movie ‘Ned Kelly’ in 1979) is now high on the AMH (Australia’s Most Haunted) list. The producers of this new series have spent a lot of time with their ghostbusting technology at the Royal. They were so blown away after the first visit ... they changed their whole

production schedule to include a second visit.

Jarrod concludes, “We want to present our hotel as a family friendly venue. As parents of small children we understand the importance of providing a space for everyone. A kids’ playground is about to be erected in the beer garden to complement our family friendly dining area.

“The locals enjoy the beer which we pride ourselves on and are confident to boast as the best in town. We offer regular karaoke nights which are equally hysterically funny and bad. Live music gigs will feature more in the future along with some other big ideas in the pipeline ... watch this space.”

Quite a difficult recipe in anyone’s book ... but I think they are going to pull it off!



Bushranger Bistro

Opening Hours: (7 Days)

Lunch 12pm to 2.30pm – Dinner 6pm to 8.30pm

Karaoke = Saturday Fortnights from 9pm
 (next is 20th April)

FAMILY FRIENDLY VENUE

Courtesy Bus

ATM • TAB

Beer Garden • Accommodation

Games Room • Bottle Shop

*It's All Happening
 @ The Royal*