

# Puddings make sweet melody

**Claire Heaney**

TALK of Christmas puddings is sweet music to Mandi Mellody's ears — she has been able to turn her passion for the traditional fare into a thriving family business.

As a single mum to two children, Ms Mellody was looking for a way to supplement her income as a kindergarten assistant.

About 14 years ago she started making traditional boiled puddings based on a family recipe.

Ms Mellody began selling them at markets and through her children's schools.

The puddings are soaked and cooked in a lined calico wrap.

"Our method of cooking the puddings dates back hundreds of years," she said.

After starting Mandi's Kitchen at home she later graduated to a commercial kitchen.

"My business has grown, just like the kids, with the help of my family and close friends," she said.

Ms Mellody's mother, Esther, 81, helps out, as do her children, Andrew and Kate, who are now in their early 20s.

Ms Mellody said from just a few dozen puddings in her first year she has expanded the range. Her puddings are available at gourmet retail stores and many corporates use them for gifts as they can have their company logo printed on the fabric.

They are also used as fundraisers where Ms Mellody sells them at a wholesale price and the organisation can make a profit by selling them at a retail mark-up.

She said she met Tammie Fraser, the wife of former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, and she embraced them as fundraiser for the Red Cross.



**Good wraps:** Christmas puddings spin money for Mandi Mellody.

Ms Mellody said markets were still a mainstay for the business.

In coming weeks she will travel to Red Hill, Highett, Yarra Glen, Dingley, Collingwood, Werribee, Mornington, Albert Park, Ballarat, and everywhere in between to attend markets in the lead-up to Christmas.

"There have been some funny stories about markets, like times when we have been washed out and had to have the car towed out," she said.

This week Ms Mellody has been an exhibitor at Fine Food Australia at Melbourne Exhibition Centre.

The exhibition was attended by buyers, distributors and hospitality industry workers throughout Australia and Asia on the hunt for new products.

Ms Mellody said that, while the lead-up to Christmas remained peak time for the business, people buy puddings year-round.

Apart from the traditional pudding there is a gluten-free offering and five small logs with decadent flavours such as triple chocolate,

chocolate rum and raisin, date and toffee, chocolate and orange and macadamia and brandy.

The less traditional puddings are often bought for special celebrations.

Ms Mellody said Christmas lunch at her bayside home saw most of the flavours rolled out.

"Kate likes the chocolate, I like the macadamia and brandy, Andrew likes the date and toffee and mum likes the traditional pudding," she said.

Ms Mellody said she had adopted environmentally sound initiatives such as using recycled products and reducing waste.

"It is extremely satisfying to be in a business that upholds a much-loved tradition and reflects modern day thinking at the same time," she said.

"I am constantly surprised by the loyalty of my customers, and through their recommendations they have played a very important part in my success."

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