

Gifts of good taste: Hampers capture nation's heart

A Dandenong South online business has struck on the perfect Covid-19 survival food.

In 2019, husband and wife Ash and Sasha Hewawasam took over the Taste Buds business, which specialises in indulgent chocolate bouquets and edible gift hampers.

The savvy pair quickly refined and struck on a thriving formula, increasing annual revenue from \$800,000 to \$3 million.

With 40 per cent market share, it's the second-largest online food hamper business in Australia.

In the process, they cut some of the less trendy products, and got a feel for what was popular. They tinkered with products' colours, sizes and prices, and spent up on marketing on Google and Facebook.

Gift hampers are tailored for 'him' and 'her', with Father's Day offerings including combos of chocolates and snacks with tawny port, beer, bourbon or Scotch.

Peak times are the indulgent events on the calendar such as Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Easter and Christmas.

Half-metre chocolate Christmas trees are particularly sought, Mr Hewawasam said.

The business was a brave new venture for the couple. Mr Hewawasam, a former accountant and Dulux chief financial officer, said his wife suggested they make a change and carry out their own business.

"She said why should you work seven days a week making other people rich.

"Why don't we work for ourselves?"

Brokers presented a few options for businesses to take on. They latched onto Taste Buds because they "loved the idea" and thought they could "take it to the next level".

During Covid-19 lockdown, they have branched into further online companies Hampers Galore and Healthy Essentials Australia



Taste Buds staffer Nat with an appetising chocolate-heart bouquet. 246286

Picture: STEWART CHAMBERS

from their Dandenong South base.

Hampers Galore offers luscious gift packages of snacks, chocolates with wine, champagne, beer or Moscato.

They target a range of tastes and occasions, with products as lockdown survival kits, tradies snack hampers, and Moet Lovers pack.

Healthy Essentials Australia delivers 1400

healthy foods and supermarket items including vegan hampers, gluten-free hampers, household cleaning and laundry products, baby food, nappies and wipes.

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