

The Nelson Mail - November 2010 Weddings fuel Mudcastle expansion

by Karen Goodger

The Mudcastle in Upper Moutere has trebled its wedding bookings for next year and is planning to build a commercial kitchen to cater for its growth.



Owners Kevin and Glenys Johnston didn't intend the property to be a business when they purchased it six weeks after seeing it in 1990. "This is just our home," Mrs Johnston said.

On the up: Glenys and Kevin Johnston, owners of the Mudcastle in the Moutere are expanding their business by planning to build a commercial kitchen on site.

Photo: Marion van Dijk

"It's two years into a recession, but we're at the point of expanding. It makes sense financially to carry on making changes to our home when the demand is there."

Mrs Johnston said it was too commercially sensitive to reveal how many weddings were booked next year. There are some days where morning and afternoon weddings are booked to fit people in.

Last month the Mudcastle contracted Kudos Food Design of Nelson to take over from The Catering Company as its primary catering service.

The Johnstons are planning to build a commercial kitchen on site next autumn, after the wedding season. The Tasman District Council had been really supportive of the development because there were very few permitted commercial kitchens in the region, Mrs Johnston said.

"We'll be making it available on a casual basis."

The Johnstons want the kitchen to be sustainable - in keeping with the Mudcastle's approach - and this includes sourcing second-hand equipment where possible.

"It will be really exciting to build from scratch." Mrs Johnston was unsure what to attribute the upturn in business to, other than maybe the redevelopment of its website and closure of other similar businesses.

There's been a real resurgence of interest in its theatre dinners since the playhouse near Mapua closed, she said. "This Christmas is looking really healthy, whereas the last two have been diabolical."

The Mudcastle has been operating as a bed and breakfast since 1992 and can cater for up to 100 people as a function venue. The corporate sector was still incredibly mindful of budgets and public perception of spending money wisely, Mrs Johnston said.

"Maybe that's the new reality in terms of corporate bookings but weddings are definitely on the up as far as we can see."

Maybe people are solidifying their relationships as a form of security, she said. "Who knows."