

THE DAILY NEWS
BUSINESS

Beefing up tourism on the menu for award-winning city couple

By RENEE KIRIONA

AWARD-WINNING BUSINESS couple Chere and Bill Bailey have traded in their sandwiches for backpacks in the hope of beefing up tourism in New Plymouth.

The pair recently sold their inner-city business of four years, Sandwich Extreme and Espresso Bar, to buy Sunflower Lodge, located at Puke Ariki in the top floor of the old Royal Hotel.

Their investment in the business — not the building, which is being leased — is perfect timing, with a Visitors' Information Centre soon to be built in the area.

The framed awards hanging on the wall of their cafe illustrate the Baileys' business feats. Just some of their accolades include best lifestyle and best small business for Taranaki in 2001.

That same year Bill collected the best barista award for the central North Island and a third in the New Zealand finals.

Healthy profits have also rewarded the Baileys in the past two years.

"We average 200-plus customers per day and in the past four years our profits have increased by 200%," Bill said.

"It's a great business that has allowed us to raise the capital to buy the lodge."

So why sell a business that is booming?

"We've gone as far as we can in the local food industry, we need new challenges and there's a lot that needs to be done in tourism," Chere said.

"It's also been our dream to own an accommodation business."

While on their big OE in 1998, the 30-something couple worked at a number of resorts, including the Les Arc Shallot in the French Alps where Chere, from Waitara, worked as the manager and Bill, from the city, a ski guide.

Bill, who admits to complaining a lot about the region's tourism, can't wait to become more proactive.

"I use to moan and groan but now I want to do something about it," he said.

Some concerns the couple plan to address include a lack of drinking



BACKPACKERS' REST: The Sunflower Lodge, a dream and a challenge for the new owners.
 Photo: ADRIAN MALLOCH

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water fountains in the city, poor direction and information maps and negative misconceptions about Taranaki.

"A lot of people don't come here because they have been given misinformation, like the roads are awful," Bill said. "Once people hear that sort of stuff, it puts them off coming here."

While the Baileys did not want to get into specifics about their business plans, they said they intend to provide visitors with the real Kiwi experience.

"Tourists are sick of the designed tour packages because they feel these aren't giving them the real thing."

"If we can target them then I think

we'll make huge progress with our developing tourism industry.

The Baileys said regulars at Sandwich Extreme can rest assured that everything but the ownership is sure to stay the same with all of its staff staying on.

The new owners are Fran Bateman, an experienced caterer, and Marcus Campbell, both from New Plymouth.

"We need new challenges and there's a lot that needs to be done in tourism."

— Chere Bailey

Bill recently designed a franchise system for Sandwich Extreme and Espresso Bar but would wait until the latest business had been developed before going further with that.

The lodge has 10 rooms and can sleep 31 people in total.



PRIME SPOT: Chere and Bill Bailey have a great view from their new business premises.
 Photo: ADRIAN MALLOCH