



Darren Carlow and Andrew Snee bake, dress and espresso for success

## Naked Baker gets new clothes

### Belinda Jeursen looks anew



If you're thinking of doing a shop or bakery refit, hiring the right contractor can be crucial to getting the job done on time, on budget and with the finished result that you want. Darren Carlow and Andrew Snee of The Naked Baker in Christchurch can't emphasise enough the difference their contractor made to the refitting of their bakery and café at North Brighton in Christchurch.

Recently completed, the space has been transformed into a spacious, user friendly bakery and café which both staff and customers are enjoying. Darren says it's taken everyone a while to get used to the new layout, customers included, but that it is much better to work in, accommodates crowds well and is easier to clean. "We had to rethink the product layout and it's taken customers a while to adjust but their comments have been really positive. We joke with them and say they have to dress up to come here now!"

The refurbishment was a three year project from start to finish, although the final phase was carried out in a month. The delays to the final refit were mainly due to council consent delays and trouble with an architect who had to hand the job over to another when family issues took precedence.

Andrew advises anyone doing a refit to get copies of all plans, preferably in colour, so that everyone see exactly what has to be done. "There's a lot to be said for a solid set of plans. Especially electrical plans."

Darren says they hired two freight containers to store the bakery and shop contents. "We only had one day to get everything out, and we should have ordered three containers. I ended up with half the stuff in my lounge and hallway and it was a bit of a nightmare."

The two still want to make more changes but the basics are in place and while this happened a lot later in the year than they expected, their contractor promised the refit would be done within a month, and amazingly it was. "We were able to start baking again after three weeks.

"Miles Construction did the job for us. He is an absolute perfectionist and documented everything. He recorded the minutes of all the meetings we had with tradesmen and then emailed them to all of us after double checking everything. We all knew what was supposed to be happening when. We were able to use the minutes and emails to ensure that tradesmen did what they had promised," says Darren. Andrew adds that he and Darren were on site every day, sometimes more than once, to keep an eye on what was happening.

"We reduced the building to a shell and started again, changing the layout to suit our needs. It's far more efficient now, with better plumbing and lighting and

more bench space, and things are where we want and need them to be. Previously we put things wherever they'd fit." says Andrew.

They operated out of a brand new caravan while the refit was taking place. A marginal drop in customers for the month hasn't been an issue. "We wanted to keep our regulars happy. We focused mainly on the coffee and offered a reduced range of baked goods." There's a steady flow of people while I am there and the café area is very welcoming. The layout creates distinct spaces and lots of seating options.

Andrew says that while it cost them more to use a contractor to project manage the job it was worth every cent. "Our contractor used his knowledge to our advantage and really saved us money with his ideas. It would have taken much longer if we'd done it ourselves." There were some disappointments: "We wanted a higher ceiling for a more industrial look," Darren tells me, "but the council wouldn't allow it so we ended up with a lower ceiling. I'm going to add features to it." Andrew's final piece of advice is to be very specific about what you want. "You need to know exactly what it is you want and then make sure the contractor knows and understands this too. Adding in extras later on costs a lot of money."

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