

CHARLIES GELATO GARDEN

summermeltdown

Matakana producers go from honesty box to top attraction

Nothing signals the end of winter quite like the opening of Charlies Gelato Garden in Sharp Road, Matakana.

And this year, the centre has a few surprises in store.

What began as an honesty box stall on the side of the road nearly 20 years ago, selling fresh strawberries, beans and table grapes over summer, has grown into one of the most popular ice cream destinations north of Auckland. Last year, they won the Local Food Producer Award in Rodney's Manaakitanga Hospitality Awards.

Owners Heather King and Charlie Wrigglesworth have just finished a second renovation at the premises, ahead of their summer opening this month.

Gelato fans will be pleased to note that the changes include the addition of another display counter, which means the centre can now offer up to 35 different flavours. A viewing window has also been installed so customers can watch the gelato being made.

The kitchen has nearly doubled in size, the serving area is roomier and additional seating has been installed,

inside and out. An internal connection has been added, between the shop and the art gallery.

"The success of the centre has been beyond our wildest dreams," Charlie says. "We've put our efforts into being consistent and offering a quality product – we knew the locals wouldn't accept anything less."

Heather and Charlie moved to their four-hectare lifestyle block just over 20 years ago. The property was once part of the Gardener farm, which also included Herons Flight and Plume, down to Oak River Drive.

"We were looking for enough space to finish building our 34-foot yacht," Charlie says. "In one year, we bought the property, finished the boat and had our first child. Needless to say, something had to give and the boat was it!"

While Heather continued to commute to Auckland, Charlie gave up his job as an industrial chemist to start developing the property; although his chemistry background didn't go to waste.

Heather says one of the fun aspects of the work is experimenting with new flavours.

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Heather King and Charlie Wrigglesworth.



Charlies
GELATO GARDEN

Real Fruit
Homemade Icecream

Opening Saturday 3rd September
Father's Day Special - 1/2 Price Sundaes All Weekend
September Special Flavour - Black Forest Gelato

Open 7 days - 9am-5pm
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CHARLIES GELATO GARDEN

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Gelato is just like ice cream, only denser and thicker – with more flavour, less fat and less air than normal ice cream. At Charlies, they make their gelato and sorbetto daily in small batches to keep the fresh taste and high quality. They use seasonal fruit either grown on the property or sourced locally. Charlies Gelato Garden is modelled on a *gelateria artigianale*. Every month, they feature a new flavour and this month it's black forest gelato (chocolate gelato with crunchy chocolate chip and cherries).

Bigger and better

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"We're constantly trialling new combinations and when we find one we think we like, it's Charlie's job to perfect the recipe," she says. "We have a pretty good tasting team so thankfully, there haven't been any disasters. Liquorice was a bit of a surprise though – we thought it might

be a novelty for a few months but it soon became a standard."

A new flavour on its way this summer includes gelato made from homemade ginger beer.

Charlies re-opens this month ... roll on summer!

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Congratulations Heather & Charlie on your shop opening



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all the very
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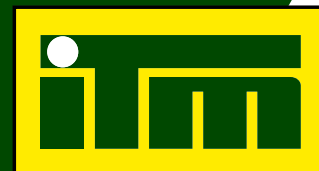
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Congratulations Heather & Charlie.

Open Mon-Fri 7am-5pm • Sat 8.30am-12.30pm