On the beaten track

More and more travellers on the Hume Highway are pausing at Jugiong for refreshments.

WORDS BY SOPHIE HERRON. PHOTOGRAPHY BY EMMA REILLY

Turn off the Hume Highway for Jugiong, a NSW hamlet between Yass and Gundagai, and you can't miss the Long Track Pantry. The café, on the poplar-lined main street, opened in January 2006 and swiftly found a following among locals and travellers weary of fast food.

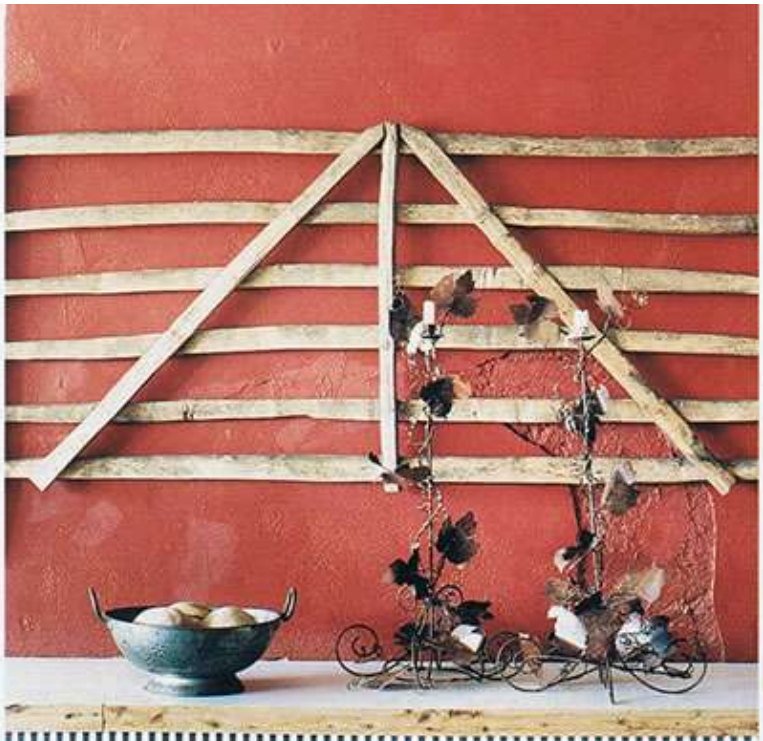
The Pantry is the creation of Jo Miller, a former *ACS* fashion editor, and Juliet Reading, a country cook with a magnetic personality. Starting out with no restaurant experience and a modest budget, they transformed Jugiong's defunct general store into a stylish and friendly space.

"It still amazes me that people make the effort to come and eat here," Juliet says. "But every day we have more people saying they never drive past without stopping in."

The breakfast menu offers eggs and prosciutto, homemade muesli and raisin toast. For lunch there's soup with corn fritters, toasted sandwiches, or one of Juliet's delicious pies and tarts, while the kids can choose from simple pizzas, toasties and the very popular "lickety-split ice-creams", which come in cute little tubs and flavours ranging from chocolate to berry sorbet. Older sweet tooths are likely to be tempted by apple-and-walnut cake or crushed raspberry tart.

Juliet ensures there's always plenty of takeaway items, from roast beef and chutney rolls to frozen soups and beef, bacon and red wine pies. There's even preserves made with fruit from her family's farm, and everything is packaged with the café's signature red-and-white ribbon.

The Long Track Pantry's considerable style — contemporary country with great warmth — can be largely attributed to



Clockwise from above left Jo's stylist background is evident throughout; Juliet's trout pâté; this dresser was one of Jo's local finds; cakes are baked fresh every day. **Facing page** Proprietors Jo Miller (left) and Juliet Reading.

Jo. From the painted floorboards and the chairs found online to the red-washed walls and artworks adorning them, it's a great space. Decorations feature work by local artists, such as Yass sculptor Al Phemister's beautiful metal pear on the sideboard and the whimsical sketches of Jugiong resident Stephanie Corkhill.

"For years I worked as a stylist, putting sets and looks together only to pull them down again the same day," Jo explains. "Here I'm styling for real people, and watching them enjoy and interact with the space." And interact they do. The café is lived in (and loved) not only by locals and travellers seeking refreshment, but also by book clubs, mothers' groups and businesses booking birthday parties and long lunches.

It's been a big year for both women, and particularly for Juliet, who gave birth recently to her first child. But even Alexander's arrival doesn't seem to have slowed her down.

"I do more cooking from home these days — but the menu, rosters, ordering and most of the pantry cooking is still all me," she says. "This is my business and I'm finding a way to make it work alongside motherhood."

Thankfully for all who can't drive past without dropping in, Juliet is managing it all beautifully, and the Long Track Pantry seems set to remain a welcome diversion on any Hume trip.

"I think people are just so pleasantly surprised to find something so 'right' in a place that deserves it," Jo concludes. ACS

The Long Track Pantry is on Riverside Drive, Jugiong, NSW. Telephone (02) 6945 4144.