

# Siwa Fresh



Adrian and Margaret Tiller

**N**othing celebrates summer more than the sizzle of lamb chops on the BBQ. Childhoods spent by the river bank, in the back yard and by the pool were never without the humble chop. The Tiller family from Siwa Fresh, Roma are doing everything they can to ensure we all have our hands....and mouths full of lamb this summer.

The story started when Adrian Tiller, a grazier from Roma purchased a small, but very beautiful property, 100km's south of Roma called 'Siwa'. With increased input costs, especially with regards to freight, Adrian envisaged one day he would market directly to the consumer, supplying lamb, goat and beef to tables around Queensland.

"Many farmers have started to look into the ways of cutting out the middle-man", says Adrian. "With lower input costs, controlling the supply chain makes sense, obviously financially, but environmentally too."

Not necessarily a 'new' idea, many farmers have given direct marketing a go in recent years. "We spoke to many of them when considering this as a viable business," says Adrian. "Some have been very successful and gave us great ideas – others warned us we would be mad!"

Siwa Fresh started to grow legs last year when Amy, Adrian's daughter returned from ten years abroad. Her tenacity, combined with a background in Arts Marketing, has seen Siwa Fresh hit the ground running.

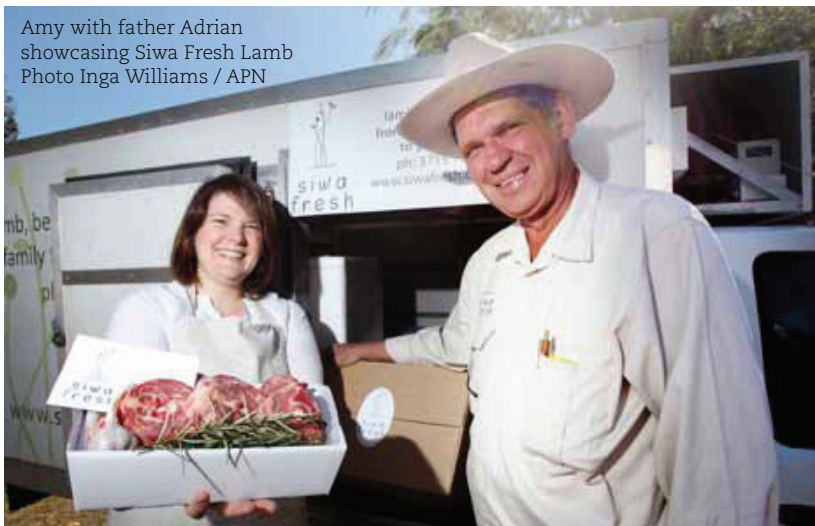
"I was Marketing Manager of Cork Opera House for 5 years and worked for Sydney Opera House and Sydney Festival before that," says Amy. "I knew Dad wanted me to help him set up the business and with two small children, working from home was an attractive prospect."

So with Amy on board, the Tiller family put the idea into action and Siwa Fresh found its way from 'paddock to plate' in March this year. Slowly building a customer base through word-of-mouth, flyers and farmers markets, customers are genuinely grateful when Siwa Fresh delivers its products.

"Ordering from the farmer is something that many have wanted to do but haven't known where to find one!" says Amy.

With Amy and her parents now based in Brisbane, marketing opportunities for Siwa Fresh have opened up significantly. Knowing the customer base and understanding what the customers want, has meant the business has grown in a down trending market.

"Being able to attend farmer's markets in Brisbane, and promote throughout the city means we are bringing the lamb to the door - making it easier for them to access the products," says Amy. "I think this has been essential



Amy with father Adrian showcasing Siwa Fresh Lamb  
Photo Inga Williams / APN



as it would be very difficult to achieve this if we were still based out west."

Still Roma locals at heart, the Tiller's called Roma home for more than 20 years. Though always living in town (Margaret, Adrian's wife attests she would go crazy with total isolation) both Adrian and Margaret and their children have contributed so much to the rural community over the years. Now, retired to Brisbane to be closer to the grandkids, both miss country life enormously. Adrian continues to go to 'Siwa' regularly, and as Amy will confess, "it's Dad's perfect getaway!"

A family business through and through, Adrian is very much involved in the production side of Siwa Fresh, with the invaluable help from on farm manager, Les Leddington-Hill and his family. Most of the managerial and marketing decisions fall into Amy's realm, while Margaret, who only recently sold her bookshop in Roma, helps with farmers markets and accounts.

'Mum is also the perfect sounding board and more than available for a chat over a coffee' laughs Amy. "Even my husband Greg hasn't been able to escape the business clutches and does deliveries for us!"

With the price of supermarket lamb under pressure, there certainly have been significant challenges in establishing Siwa Fresh and the Tiller family have found customers are more concerned with good quality, organic produce with traceability, rather than price. However, by 'cutting out the middle-man,' Siwa Fresh is able to remain competitive with larger supermarket chains through effective pricing strategies.

"We have found that setting up all the links in the chain - from the gate to the plate - is one of the biggest challenges. Finding organic meatworks that can squeeze us in, inconsistent freight from Roma to Brisbane and butchering to our standards is testing!" says Amy. "Unfortunately while we are still growing, economy of scale comes into play and moving small quantities of animals as we build our business is hard work for an already hard working staff."

So what next for Siwa Fresh Lamb? "Our first goal was to always provide a product that we could be proud of, and thankfully our many repeat buyers have testified to that. Our main goal now is sustainability, and to address this we need to push through the numbers so the process becomes more cost effective, and makes all this work worthwhile," says Amy. "While we knew that it wouldn't happen overnight, we hope that within our second year the number of organic lambs and goats (and hopefully soon to be beef) we are selling direct to the public can form a considerable chunk of 'Siwa's' income."

Like many direct marketing endeavours, Siwa Fresh

"Siwa" Roma



is not without its ups and downs; however this 'little lamb campaign' comes with something a little different. With Amy's wealth of marketing experience combined with Adrian's lifetime knowledge of grazing, and a family with strong work ethics, makes this 'paddock to plate' model unique. The most impressive aspect of the marketing strategy is that Siwa are bringing lamb 'right to the door'... literally, which is often missed when tied up on farm away from the market. So as the days warm up, and the BBQ's ignite, one thing is for certain...in the words of Sam Kekovich, Siwa Fresh will definitely be "making the chop"!

Words: Erin Corish Images: Amy Tiller and Siwa Fresh

