

Making whey for a new chapter

Dairy meets deco at a bespoke tourism destination that's brimming with delectable details.

Whitestone Cheese Co has long been a celebrated foodie fixture of artisanal dairy aisles. After nearly 40 years in operation, what was once a small family business with a single product offering has blossomed into a globally recognised company that produces more than two dozen different world-class cheeses. Now, fans of the brand have something new to salivate over; a unique hospitality experience that's become an iconic destination for cheese lovers near and far, the Whitestone Cheese Diner & Deli. This latest venture marks a fresh chapter in the family-owned company's story, blending its rich heritage of cheesemaking with a contemporary dining and retail experience.

Located in Oamaru, the heart of Whitestone's operations, the new space offers visitors a chance to enjoy the brand's award-winning cheeses in a whole new way with a menu of mouthwatering dishes, thirst-quenching beverages and a wide selection of products for takeaway. For the Berry family, who founded Whitestone in 1987, this expansion is more than just a business move; it's a natural evolution

of their passion for high-quality, locally made cheese. Over the decades, their commitment to traditional techniques, premium ingredients and regional flavours has earned them a loyal following across New Zealand and beyond.

"It's been a lengthy journey to arrive where we are now," says Simon Berry, Whitestone Cheese Managing Director. "There has been a lot of development in our people, products and production facilities. We are constantly evolving and always working towards a sustainable outcome, this includes new products, new facilities and supplying different markets.

Simon is the son of founders Bob and Sue Berry and says that the whole family plays an active role in the business. "My father sits on our board and provides invaluable direction and operational support, my sister Vanessa runs the Queenstown Farmers Market Cheese stall and my wife Annabel is always part of every decision."

As a multi-faceted designer and the visionary at the helm of Annabel Berry Creative Co, it's natural that Annabel would be the creative force behind the Diner & Deli concept. She and her team handled all aspects of the interior design,

exterior design and alfresco dining, the menu creation and direction as well as the graphic design direction for all the new merchandise, menus, promotional material, social media and marketing. The brief for the physical space was to create a concept focused on discovery and education that would delight and surprise customers through a casual relaxed dining experience with a welcoming, warm atmosphere – and Annabel was able to draw on various past experiences to help pull it all together.

"Over the course of my career, I have worked in design, marketing, events and management positions, so this project brought all of those previous skillsets together into one," she says.

Repurposing real estate is not something new for Whitestone, as the company's very first factory was housed in a converted garage. The Diner & Deli site was originally home to Tui Tearooms from the late 1950s, a popular destination among tourists and locals alike during its heyday. When Whitestone purchased it, the building needed a major intervention to bring it up to modern standards, but there was a strong desire to maintain its nostalgic connection to its roots and



reflect the local community. This dictated much of the overall scheme as the design team leaned into its eclectic retro and deco details.

The two-storey building's original exterior featured red brick and beige plaster cladding with a deco-style curved fascia around both levels and a flat roof on the bottom storey. At the rear of the building was a grassed cottage garden area and three separate accommodation units that were also part of the site. In discussions with the Whitestone board, it was determined that an alfresco dining area and the accommodation units would need to be part of the re-design to make the area cohesive. Being in the middle of a residential area with similar brick buildings meant that the palette needed to be bold and set the building apart.

With more than 15,000 fast-moving vehicles travelling by each day on State Highway 1, choosing an exterior colour palette that would be highly visible from the road was also critical to the success of the project. "Our design plan needed to complement the quirk of the town and deliver an interior that leaned into the 1950s sensibility of the building. National competition in the speciality cheese industry includes large-scale corporations, but Whitestone had the ability to be more nimble, flexible and fun! They could do something other competitors cannot do and show more personality in their brand story, and the interior and colour palette had to reflect that," says Annabel.

"The original Tui Tearooms hold a lot of memories and nostalgia for those in North Otago and we wanted to respect and nurture that," she adds. "In my role as designer, it is vitally important to me that the heritage of a building is respected and that is where you can find originality in storytelling and design. I wanted to lean into its history and ensure that what we delivered respected the past but also ensured practicality and longevity for the building. The previous brick and plaster exterior blended into the residential environment and a colour palette needed to be developed that would make this a beacon at the north end of Oamaru."

As part of its reinvention as the Whitestone Cheese Diner & Deli, the building's former red brick and beige plaster façade has been completely transformed in a fresh new Resene colour scheme that can't help but draw the eye of those driving down State Highway 1. The bold and daring palette in Resene Lynchpin (brick and plaster façade), Resene Awaken (fascia and accommodation door) and Resene Double Alabaster (soffits, windows and door frames) makes its presence felt from the exterior scheme right through the interior to the alfresco dining area beyond. "The exterior palette stands out and makes a statement," says Annabel Berry, who was involved in all aspects of the project's design – right down to the menus and merch. "It draws people in and sets the building apart from others in a way that's bold and original while also being cohesive to the overall scheme. Without a doubt, this has been our most successful project to date and the reasoning for this is down to the colour palette which has brought excitement, inspiration and a joyful place to visit."



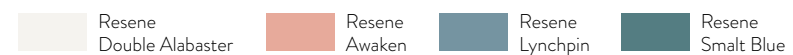


Annabel turned to the local environment and one of Whitestone’s most popular products to infuse the project with some truly authentic colour inspiration. “I chose to use the veining in Windsor Blue to inspire one of the key colours we used as it is Whitestone’s most awarded cheese and the flagship cheese for the business, so it holds very special meaning to the founders, Bob and Sue Berry. The inspiration for the coral hue came from my morning walks on Cape Wanbrow and watching the sun rise over the Oamaru Harbour. The palette is also an interpretation of founder Sue Berry’s favourite colours and I wanted to represent her within the scheme,” explains Annabel.

To find the right Resene paint colours to capture that essence, Annabel uploaded images of the cheese’s blue veining to the online Resene Colour Palette Generator which led to the selection of the main exterior blue colour, Resene Lynchpin. She also used imagery of the sun rising over Oamaru Harbour to discover the ideal complementary coral colour to support it, Resene Awaken. Since Whitestone had just completed a brand update to include new individual colours for each cheese on their packaging, Annabel drew

left: Local engineers designed and built a custom neon sign that is positioned above the entry to the shop and a local upholsterer built a candy-striped awning in coral and white to bring the project’s signature retro vibe and ensure the exterior palette makes its presence felt as visitors approach the site. To bring a cohesive look, the accommodation units at the back were also painted in Resene Lynchpin, paired with boldly contrasting doors in Resene Awaken.

above: “The customer feedback on the new colour palette has been excellent and everyone who comes to the site comments on how it brings a special atmosphere to the space. The business continues to grow and is consistently busy, and we’ve received excellent reviews from both locals and visitors to Oamaru,” says Whitestone Cheese Managing Director Simon Berry. The exterior bricks and plaster were primed in Resene Sureseal before colour coats were applied in Eco Choice approved Resene Lumbersider Low Sheen tinted to Resene Lynchpin and the aluminium window and doorframes were primed with Resene Vinyl Etch before being painted with colour coats in Resene Lustacryl tinted to Resene Double Alabaster. Fascia painted in Resene Lumbersider Low Sheen tinted to Resene Awaken, soffits in Resene Lumbersider Low Sheen tinted to Resene Double Alabaster and accommodation door painted in Resene Lustacryl tinted to Resene Awaken.





out select colours that leaned into the retro feel to round out the palette.

“The Resene colour palette informed every selection of the interior and exterior materials and finishes. Every selection was sourced with that colour palette in mind. If I couldn’t find what I was looking for, I got the item handmade to the colour I required,” Annabel explains.

Among the biggest challenges the project team faced was the laundry list of jobs that had to be done to bring the building up to modern standards: extensive engineering, new drainage, rewiring of the entire building, concrete foundation work and upgraded ventilation, heating and extraction systems. On the exterior, waterproofing and rebuilding portions of the flat roof – which had become damaged over time – was necessary to protect the building from moisture and ensure

the new signage would hold. At the back of the site, the cottage garden needed to be removed to expand the project’s seating capacity and create the alfresco dining area.

Painting the exterior brick turned out to be a controversial choice, but one that Annabel knew was the right call. “Being in a small community, we received a lot of feedback where people were initially shocked about painting the brick,” she says. “However, once the scheme came together and all the signage was completed, people started enquiring about how they too could achieve a similar look. Seeing the wider impact colour and paint can have on our community continues to drive our colourful palettes and we want to inspire others to have the confidence to use colour on the exterior and interior of their homes and businesses.”















Darryn Stewart has been running his namesake company, Darryn Stewart Painters, for 22 years. He has worked on projects with Annabel for more than a decade and was instrumental in solving many of the exterior colour conundrums.

“Together with Darryn and his crew, we were able to problem solve the issues around painting both the aluminium joinery and addressing the different cladding finishes,” says Annabel. “The first aspect that was painted on the exterior was the curved fascia running around the top of the building on each storey. After prepping and cleaning the area, Resene Lumbersider Low Sheen tinted to Resene Awaken was the perfect product to bring colour to this exterior area. We were so pleased with Resene Lumbersider Low Sheen through this project as the building had a lot of wear

- **above left and right:** Resene Quarter Kalgoorie Sands brings warmth to the walls in the dining area.
- The chairs and diner table pedestals are painted in Resene Sorrento, which ties into other areas of the interior. Annabel carefully selected textiles to echo this enticing tone on the booth seating.
- In the bar area, the ceiling features a textured Anaglypta wallpaper design, Resene Wallpaper Collection RD576, painted in Eco Choice approved Resene Lustacryl semi-gloss waterborne enamel tinted to Resene Quarter Biscotti as a nod to the building’s art deco details. Inspired by the central theme of the sun rising over Oamaru Harbour, two large custom pendants were designed to emulate clouds. Walls in Eco Choice approved Resene SpaceCote Low Sheen tinted to Resene Quarter Kalgoorie Sands, white ceiling in Eco Choice approved Resene Ceiling Paint tinted to Resene Double Alabaster and bar front in Resene Lustacryl tinted to Resene Smalt Blue.



left: Like the exterior façade, the shop features beautiful blues – Resene Sorrento and Resene Morning Haze – as a homage to Whitestone’s flagship product, Windsor Blue. Built-in arched cooler surrounds, dry goods shelving, fluted counter panelling and door frame in Resene Lustacryl tinted to Resene Sorrento, ceiling in Resene Double Alabaster and award alcove in Eco Choice approved Resene SpaceCote Low Sheen tinted to Resene Morning Haze. Among the most recent additions to the award alcove are a Resene Total Colour Commercial Interior Public + Retail Space Award and a Resene Total Colour Commercial Exterior Colour Maestro Award.

	Resene Double Alabaster		Resene Morning Haze
	Resene Quarter Biscotti		Resene Raindance
	Resene Sorbet		Resene Sorrento
	Resene Cashmere		Resene Destiny
	Resene Quarter Kalgoorie Sands		Resene Lynchpin
	Resene Half Kalgoorie Sands		Resene Smalt Blue
	Resene Kalgoorie Sands		Resene Casal

and tear and Resene Lumbersider Low Sheen effectively concealed a range of issues with the cladding and other finishes on the building. We knew the sage green window frames and doors needed to go, so our painters primed these with Resene Vinyl Etch and then painted them in Resene Lustacryl tinted to Resene Double Alabaster. The bricks needed to be prepped and cleaned and then Darryn’s team used Resene Sureseal to prime the surface before painting them in Resene Lumbersider Low Sheen tinted to Resene Lynchpin. We painted the plaster in the same colour to unify the two storeys. On the accommodation doors, we used Resene Lustacryl tinted to Resene Awaken for a hard-wearing finish that would provide the punch of colour they needed. This project has shown that

no matter what exterior you have been given, the right preparation and Resene products can change anything for the better.” Inside the building, a multi-layered experience awaits visitors that includes an interactive retail store, immersive restaurant and bar, tasting room and alfresco dining. You can’t forget where you are, as every touchpoint smacks of cheese from the elevated refrigeration units nestled within bespoke arched cabinetry, the immersive tasting bar and open kitchen and a special room that houses Whitestone’s numerous awards. The materials and details are authentic to the site’s history and every element was thoroughly considered to ensure it fit with the Resene colour palette and the overall diner concept, including the curved

joinery and custom furniture, the candy-striped flooring and patterned privacy screens that pick up on shapes seen in the Whitestone logo. Known for her richly layered colour palettes, Annabel used Resene Cashmere, Resene Kalgoorie Sands, Resene Quarter Kalgoorie Sands, Resene Half Kalgoorie Sands, Resene Quarter Biscotti, Resene Sorrento, Resene Morning Haze, Resene Smalt Blue, Resene Double Alabaster, Resene Sorbet, Resene Destiny, Resene Casal and Resene Raindance on the interior – a scheme that echoes the same Windsor Blue and sunset influences seen on the exterior. “This project is all about colour. The palette really sets it apart and provides the ‘wow’ factor when customers enter the space. It brings joy and warmth to the dining experience,

and it is what people remember when they leave,” says Annabel. Project Manager Peter Nind of Nailing it Homes says every day on the project was different and each day presented a new challenge to solve. “As the main contractor, the biggest challenge for our team was that, due to the addition of the upstairs accommodation, the building grew substantially in size and required us to create fire cells downstairs. As one might expect when you are undertaking a project like this, every time you remove wall linings, a new issue raises its head and needs to be dealt with. Once the wall linings were removed, there wasn’t really anything supporting the upstairs level where the servery is now. The piling underneath was basically floating in mid-air, so

we needed to get under the building and dig by hand for a couple of days to put a concrete pad in to support a big steel portal.”

According to Peter, the completed space is testament that those hard yards paid off. “We think that the finished space is awesome! It is nice to reflect when we go in for a meal, laughing to ourselves about all the headaches we encountered that no-one would ever know seeing the space,” he says.

“Annabel had amazing vision as it has come together perfectly! We really enjoyed working with her and Simon on this project as their level of detail and ability to make fast decisions and pivot when required ensured that we were able to deal with everything that popped up and keep the project moving forward. We have an amazing team, including our subbies who really gave it their all and worked together with everyone on the project to achieve this super job for our clients,” Peter adds.

Darryn estimates he’s likely done two dozen projects with Annabel over the years. “Annabel always has such a strong vision for her projects. All the different changes of colours made this project very interesting for my team, as was the variety of different Resene products and wallpaper that we got to use. That made it a lot different than your average day-to-day painting and decorating. I especially love how the exterior turned out. As soon as you come into Oamaru, you can’t help but notice it because of the colour. It really attracts you to that area. The interior has a real ‘wow’ factor when you go inside, too, thanks to all the colours that were selected and how Annabel brought it all together,” he says.

Ever since he started his painting career in 1984, Darryn has been using Resene products. “I have a close working relationship with Resene and I’m very happy with the products, the service I get locally and my representative. Resene’s always good when you need a bit of help or advice,” says Darryn. “I am also very lucky to have a painting team of nine skilled folks with such fine workmanship that have

been so loyal to me. Ryan and his team did the exterior and Cam led his team for the interior, helping Annabel to bring the design to life. It was a pleasure working with her, Simon and his client team, and the team at Nailing it Homes ran a great project. We also worked closely with the wonderful folks at Firman Joinery, since we needed to prepaint many components in their factory prior to installation.”

Simon’s staff have received extremely positive feedback since opening the Diner & Deli. “Our Google reviews regularly describe the fantastic décor, friendly supportive staff and delicious cheese experiences – and we couldn’t be prouder. The blue exterior of the building is my favourite, and the overall colour palette makes a great impact from the road and draws people in. The atmosphere that has been created has a vibe and feel that is not felt anywhere else as the result of Annabel’s design flair and showcasing the standout details of the 1957 building,” he says.



“Since opening, we have had a huge amount of people come into the diner to tell us their stories of when they lived there, stayed there or worked there,” says Annabel. “Everyone has been very complimentary about the new scheme and thrilled that we stuck to the retro feel of the building.”

Locals and tourists aren’t the only ones who have taken notice of the new Diner & Deli. The project caught the eye of the judges of the Resene Total Colour Awards, who recognised it with a Resene Total Colour Commercial Interior Public + Retail Space Award and a Resene Total Colour Commercial Exterior Colour Maestro Award.

In the future, Whitestone hopes to offer guests the experience of staying over in the motel on site once it receives a full interior makeover by Annabel to align with the Diner & Deli. “We then plan to provide an immersive cheese experience, including a guided factory tour and evening and morning meals to showcase

our cheese range. We would also combine the experience with Oamaru’s tourism attractions of viewing wild penguins in the evening and a stroll through our spectacular heritage and steampunk precinct,” adds Simon.

For cheese lovers, the prospect of an ultimate dairy destination is a mouthwatering proposition worth waiting for – but given that the Whitestone Cheese Diner & Deli has already reached legendary status, we foresee multiple stops to this must-visit venue in our future. **BW**

design and colour selection Annabel Berry

Creative Co, www.annabelberry.com

construction documentation Virginia Barlow
Architecture, www.vbalimited.co.nz

build Nailing it Homes, www.facebook.com/nailingithomes

joinery Firman Joinery, www.firmanjoinery.co.nz

bespoke steel fabrication and signage Apex
Engineering, www.apexengineering.co.nz

painting Darryn Stewart Painters & Decorators

images Rachel Wybrow Photography,
www.rachelwybrowphotography.com

far left: Whitestone Cheese’s new Diner & Deli incorporates many bespoke components that speak to the masterful handiwork of many local businesses. “It was vitally important for me to use local makers and deliver a truly North Otago project,” says Annabel. “Over the years, I have come to know some incredible local people who deliver a high-quality finish – and it was imperative to me that we showcase their skills and abilities, proving that no matter where you reside in the world, you can deliver a world-class project by supporting local.” Left wall in Resene Sorrento, right wall and door frame in Resene Smalt Blue and ceiling in Resene Double Alabaster.

left: With no detail overlooked, Annabel’s Resene colour palette informed every surface throughout the project. Striped wall painted in Eco Choice approved Resene SpaceCote Low Sheen tinted to Resene Cashmere and Resene Kalgoorie Sands, left wall and door frame in Resene Sorrento, skirting boards in Resene Sorrento (left) and Resene Cashmere (right) and ceiling in Resene Double Alabaster.