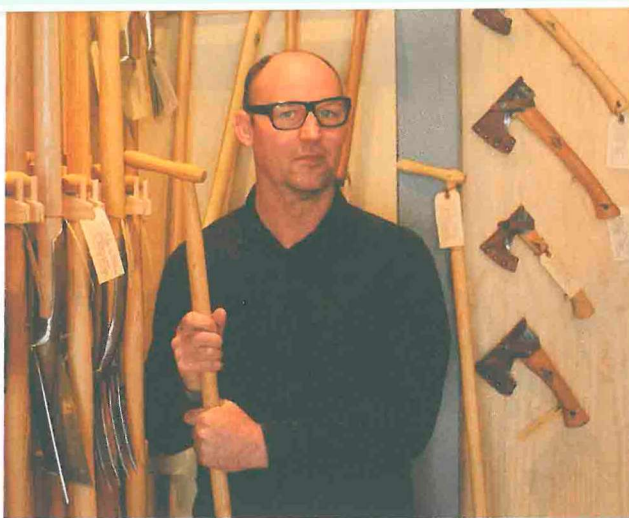


SETTING UP SHOP

CASE STUDIES: RETAIL

Preface:

Spotting a niche in the market is often the key to a retail venture's success — but viable ideas can prove to be elusive. From a casual observation at cookery school to creating a niche business from smaller like-minded brands, here are some ideas that popped up in the unlikeliest of places.



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Phillip & Lea *Trentham, Australia*

Most of Chris Mauger's professional life has revolved around calculated gambles. He worked in risk management for 15 years; it paid well but he had a niggling desire to escape. "I would often imagine myself shooting pheasant, foraging for mushrooms and then going home to smother my pheasant in pork lard," he says.

A visit to renowned Tasmanian cookery school The Agrarian Kitchen convinced Mauger (pictured) that his bucolic fantasy was shared. It highlighted that he wasn't the only one struggling to source high-quality paddock-to-plate cooking implements in Australia. For years Mauger pondered the idea of starting a business to fill this gap. He forced himself into action by buying a shipping container of preserving jars during his honeymoon in Paris. "I didn't have a warehouse or anything," he says. "But I needed something to tell myself that I was beginning this new journey."

The empty jars ultimately found their way onto the shelves of Phillip & Lea, the retail and wholesale operation established by Mauger in 2013. The company, which specialises in European-made tools for cooks, gardeners, hunters and foragers, is based in Trentham, a small town of 600 people an hour outside of Melbourne.



The firm has already become a destination for locals and day-tripping Melbourneans. Signature items include Mauviel cookware, Opinel knives and Haws watering cans. "People have to feel that they can't get your products anywhere else," says Mauger whose turnover exceeds AU\$300,000 (€210,000). "Cheap and cheerful is reigning supreme and I hate it. I say be a contrarian! Opening a small business is all about having a propensity for risk-taking." — AC

Top tip: "We're set up for online retail but it is important to us that people can feel the stuff that we have in store."