

# Star power lends online sales boost

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BAROSSA Valley-based cook Maggie Beer's daily videos on social media websites Instagram and Facebook resulted in a 220 per cent boost to online sales of her namesake products in the three months to June.

The surge was revealed in the unaudited trading update released on Thursday by Australian sharemarket-listed Longtable Group, the owner of Maggie Beer Products.

Final results are due on August 20, but the strong May and June sales will see the group back on track to achieve a positive trading earnings before interest, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA), an increase of approximately \$5.3 million on the FY19 trading result.

The popular celebrity chef and author launched her Cooking with Maggie daily videos in April in the midst of SA's COVID-19 lockdown – and two months after the sudden death of her daughter Saskia Beer.

"I love to cook every day and given these unprecedented times, it will be fun for me to share easy, quick dishes ... It's an opportunity for me to give back to the community for the incredible kindness I've been surrounded by as I know well that finding comfort in food sustains us," she said at the time.

The videos have now been viewed more than 4.4 million times and delivered a boost to the last quarter of FY20.

Online sales for Maggie Beer Products were up 37 per cent to the end of June 30, compared to FY19.



Maggie Beer, pictured in her Nuriootpa kitchen that was featured in her daily video series during the COVID-19 lockdown. Picture by Matt Turner.

Net sales overall rose 3.5 per cent compared to FY19, despite exceptionally challenging trading conditions during H2 FY20, mainly the summer bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic. Longtable chief executive Chantale Millard said the trading results reflected the hard work done to reduce costs, improve efficiencies, grow sales and return the group to a positive cash flow position.

“It is pleasing to see the positive results from the hard work that has been done in each of the businesses by our teams over the past 12 months that will allow us to continue to deliver on our strategy and purpose,” Ms Millard said.

“The star power of celebrity chef Maggie Beer has never been more evident than during the COVID-19 lockdown.”

Longtable’s cash position was \$7.2 million at the end of June, up from \$5.1 million at the end of December.

Maggie Beer, 75, sold the business to Longtable, which also owns the Paris Creek and Saint David Dairy businesses, for more than \$25 million in 2016.

Longtable is making further attempts to harness the popular chef’s appeal by changing its name to Maggie Beer Holdings, subject to a shareholder vote on the move on July 16.