

HOW PASTRY CHEFS HOMED IN ON STUNNING RECOVERY

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Claire and William Wood, of Careme Pastry in Tanunda, thrived during the later part of the pandemic lockdown as Aussies lapped up their array of products, insets.

AFTER planning for the worst back in March, Careme Pastry managing director Claire Wood admits she's been pleasantly surprised at how 2020 has so far panned out, thanks in part to a strong Barossa Valley community desire to support local producers and manufacturers.

The COVID lockdown initially hit the Tanunda-based business, established in 2005 by Ms Wood and husband William to supply home cooks, chefs and food service professionals with quality packaged butter pastry products.

But buoyed by its domestic retail sales – primarily from home cooks making the most of their lockdown time to get busy baking – Careme Pastry has since bounced back to be ahead of last year's figures, while several new staff members have been appointed to help cater for demand.

"Back in March, we were preparing our business for the worst-case scenario but things didn't quite turn out like that for us," Ms Wood said. "During those first couple of weeks (of lockdown), the food service area

— which is about 50 per cent of our business — went into free fall and that was really quite a frightening period."

She said many of those businesses thankfully had been able to adapt and "pivot" into new models allowing them to continue.

"It didn't take long for a lot of hospitality businesses to figure out what they were going to do, and within two or three weeks, distributors who had sent stock back were reordering it back in again ... so we were back to our normal level of sales by the end of June," she said.

"Meanwhile, our retail side went absolutely crazy and we had 150 per cent growth there, which certainly caught us quite unawares."