

SPEAKER PROFILE



Viktoria Darabi

CULINARY TOURISM CRUSADER & WHISPERER

JP | BA(Hons) | CertIVTAE | DipEventMgmt | MGastTourism

Founder: Gastronomica, Delicious Destinations & Speaker

Viktoria Darabi is the founder of **Gastronomica**, a Food Culture Tourism Consultancy, **Delicious Destinations** – a culinary tourism experience operator/aggregator start-up and the **Culinary Tourism Collaborative** – a NFP co-operative start-up of like-minded culinary tourism crusaders.

As a Food Culture Tourism Consultant specialising in the Culinary Tourism, Events and Hospitality industries, Viktoria helps SMEs, NGOs, LGAs and Destination Development organisations leverage their food and drink culture/producers, culinary tourism trends and experiences into profits. She does this by helping them amplify their passions, skills and stories through events and activities that excite existing and entice new visitors and customers.

Her skills, passion and more than three decades of experience as both a small business owner/operator and corporate contractor gives her the power to bring together people, food trends, tourism, events and marketing in innovative ways to mitigate disruption, foster economic development and build social cohesion in communities.

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In early 2018 Viktoria completed a Le Cordon Bleu Master of Gastronomic Tourism which combined the academic disciplines of Entrepreneurship, Marketing, Tourism and Gastronomy thus giving her a deep understanding of food and drink and tourism business management skills. This also maximised her capacity to use the latest theoretical and cultural understanding of food and drink in context and in the practical pursuit of commercial objectives in business enterprises.

Her high-spirited approach, enthusiasm, energetic and passionate communication style keeps people engaged. Seeing change as invigorating, pitching fresh ideas, generating new approaches to problems gives her the ability to engage, empower, inspire and energise stakeholders with a vision. Viktoria builds team spirit through deploying EQ, collaboration and by being receptive to other's ideas.

Viktoria's insights, knowledge of food culture trends and role as crusader for culinary tourism make her an excellent speaker for small business, government and community groups keen to uncover the opportunities for economic, social, cultural and destination development within.

At age 18, Viktoria experienced Europe, fell in love with travel, culture and food, and was changed by it forever. In her early career, she worked in diverse multi-nationals, medium and small businesses in marketing roles managing budgets up to \$1M in Australia and California.

A later tree-change saw her develop an heirloom timber rocking horse business, becoming Australia's largest and only full-time makers and restorers of high quality heirloom rocking horses and being featured on TV about 20 times. During this time she founded The Hawkesbury Antiques Trail, The Hawkesbury Artists and Artisans Trail, conceived and produced the Huey in the Hawkesbury week-long filming event, wrote freelance for Australian Country Collections magazine and mentored, coached and advocated for small businesses in and on behalf of the Hawkesbury, Hills & Parramatta councils.

Viktoria has spent the last fifteen years developing relationships with Western Sydney LGAs - economic development, place & tourism managers, craft beverage makers, artisan food producers, volunteering as a board member for Taste Cultural Food Tours and providing independent contract specialist food & beverage, marketing and disruption advisory on behalf of the State's Business Connect Program, Community Transport, Parramatta Light Rail & Kur ring gai council.

ENGAGE – EMPOWER – INSPIRE – ENERGISE

Testimonials



"Not only is Viktoria passionate about food and the role it plays in our lives, but also in her approach to helping others. She has been unstintingly generous with her advice in assisting me with the marketing for my new cooking school. She has led me to connections, directories and information that has greatly enhanced my approach to building my business and its presence in the marketplace. I can't thank her enough for her assistance." **Jennie Thompson, Director, The Cooks Workshop**



"Viktoria has been a great supporter of Taste Tours, and our work as a charity and food tour business. She initially provided assistance as an advisor and mentor, eventually joining the

Board at the 2017 AGM. Viktoria is sharp and intelligent, diligent and hard working. She provides a high level framework for understanding the why and how of what we do, and will put in the hard yards to make things happen. She is bold and enthusiastic and not shy of putting in the hours it takes to do things properly. She makes things happen, and she does that very well." **Lesley Unsworth, CEO, Taste Food Tours**



"I have worked with and have taken advice from Viktoria over the past 9 years. Viktoria is a person that will truly motivate you to bigger and better achievements. She is a small business marketing guru and very well experienced in social media and

content marketing. As the owner of Renaissance Rocking Horses her promotional strategies once implemented saw the business grow to a stage where it was booked out 10 months in advance!" **Alan Eagle, Operations, Farmgate Trail (formerly Hawkesbury Harvest)**

"Viktoria has advised me on fit-out, menu design, buyer personas, social media and put me in touch with reliable a Franchise advisor. She is one of the best in the field and has been particularly helpful with marketing strategy development and implementation advice." **Sam Tech, Owner, Ya Malaysia, Parramatta, Rhodes & Chatswood**

"Viktoria made an immediate impact on our social media results, both from her great ideas and also from her passion and ability to motivate our team to make improvements. As a result of this we have signed up to 'Hey You,' a drinks and food pre-order point-of-sale software/smart phone app so we can capitalise on sales from Parramatta Light Rail and Powerhouse Museum construction crews now and into the future." **Gary Day, Owner, River Cafe, Parramatta**

"Viktoria's greatest strengths are her intelligence, passion and desire to be a lifelong learner. She is continuously exploring trends and challenging the status quo as she strives for continuous improvement." **Reyna Mendes, Learning and Development Manager, Barrington Group**

"Sharing her knowledge and experience to enable people to make a positive change is what makes Viktoria special. She would be a great asset to any team." **Blayne Webb, Director, Barrington Group**

"Viktoria is a vibrant and inspiring asset to any group or company. Always thinking 'outside the square' to get the job done, with a seemingly unlimited source of enthusiasm and energy to achieve her goals." **Mellissa Read-Devine, Member, Hawkesbury Artists & Artisans Trail**

"Viktoria is simply extraordinary. Her energy, passion and results focussed approach to marketing projects is exceptional. As a business mentor to emerging and growing businesses she is not only creative and engaging, she matches it with practical experience which will get the results you want." **Vanessa Van Wyk, Partner, Binarix Marketing + Web + Training**

"Your talk at the Scrapbooking Industry Association was very inspiring and one of the reasons we did participate this year in the Biggest Morning Tea. I have also started to be involved (in many different ways) at various school fetes (all coming up in Spring) around the area as I am trying to put into practice the idea of people seeing us out and about and in print to start remembering us. I really got a lot of inspiration from your talk and I thank you for that. I have really revved up my staff with all the ideas I brought back from SIA." **Kylie Gatto, Owner, Memories in the Making**

"Thanks so much for your time today. It has certainly given us a lot of food for thought and we have a fantastic basis now for working through many of the ideas we have had over the last few months, with more clarity and direction than we had previously. Your enthusiasm and excitement is inspiring and whilst some ideas have turned things on their heads a bit, it's all good stuff for us to think about! We really appreciate it and look forward to continuing to work with you in the future. Thanks" **Natalie Cavalli, Owner, Simply Original Fine Foods**

"Just a quick note to thank you for your time given so freely today at the DSRD seminar. I really enjoyed your presentation and can say that it stimulated my thinking and uplifted me for the day. I congratulate you on a really great presentation this morning. Looking forward to your next one. Thank you." **Cate Richmond, Ausflare**