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Noosa International Food and Wine Festival back on for 2016

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Jim Berardo, enjoys a coffee, at the Noosa International Food and Wine Festival. Source: News Corp Australia



Preparing coffee at the Noosa International Food and Wine Festival. Source: News Corp Australia

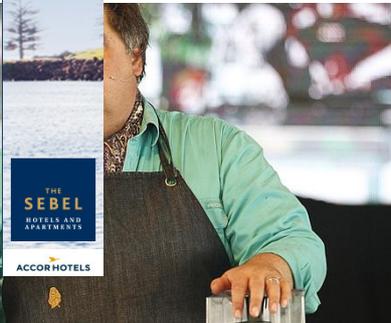
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THE Noosa International Food and Wine Festival is officially back on for 2016, with founder Jim Berardo back in the directors seat.
The festival's future has been unclear since the company went into voluntary administration on May 29. Jim Berardo confirmed that he had secured the intellectual property of the festival, with six other businesses also bidding for it. The festival will now be run under Berardo's Festival Management, with him as the sole director. "It's full speed ahead for 2016," he said. "I'm going to make good on the creditors and pay them all off over a 23 month period." Administrator John Cunningham, of Berardo's former company, said he had hired an external firm of Forensic Accountants, told The Courier-Mail in June that 120 creditors were owed up to \$700,000, with local restaurants, suppliers and chefs left out of pocket. Berardo said he had hired an external firm to monitor agreements, conduct bi-monthly audits and provide reports to sponsors.

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Celebrity Chef Matt Preston, at the Noosa Food and Wine Festival. Source: News Corp Australia



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"To prevent this happening again, any restaurants doing dinners will be paid directly from ticketing agents via electronic payment on the day of sales," he said. It's a tight turn around for Berardo and his team, who only have 90 days to lock down sponsors, chefs and key personnel for the 2016 festival, with tickets going on sale in December for the May 19 weekend. "We haven't officially signed anyone yet, but we're very close and I need to finalise arrangements." Ticket prices will remain similar to 2015 prices and he still expects around 30,000 attendees. Tim Montgomery, who was executive chef at Berardo's Bistro, which was run by the same company as the festival and closed in May, will return as festival chef. Berardo blamed wet weather conditions for poor tickets sales and revenue for the last two festivals, but says a new layout will combat any rain. "We're expanding our focus on covered events, and we're expanding the festival towards Wood Park, with infrastructure for pop-up restaurants and a new cheese hall."

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