

Meet our producers



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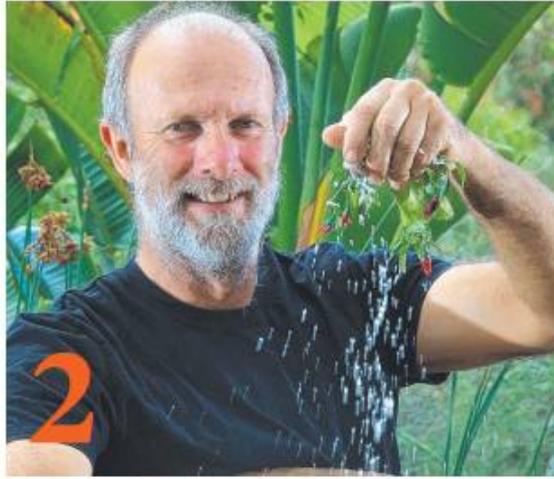
1 Glen Hill from Coorong Wild Seafood. Picture: The Producers

2 Barry Beach with his range of salts, part of the organics business he operates from his property near Middleton. Picture: Dean Martin

3 Macro Group kangaroo salad - our perfect protein. Picture: The Producers

4 Minimal handling at SA Mushrooms. Picture: The Producers

5 Eastbrook manager Scott Samwell, top, and harvesting brussels sprouts at Langhorne Creek. Pictures: Matt Turner



Education is an important part of my business. People are more interested in food provenance and the impact that food production has on the community

BARRY BEACH, BEACH ORGANICS



Coorong Wild Seafood

1 YOU can't miss Glen Hill. He's usually wearing a fluoro orange jacket, waders and boots as he goes about his business in salty Coorong waters.

Glen and Tracy Hill operate their fishing and processing business in Meningie.

"Glen came here on his way around Australia from Melbourne in 1982," Tracy says. "When he got to Meningie, he stopped. Glen worked on dairy farms here and went out with the local fisherman a few times ... he absolutely loved it and decided he wanted to be a fisherman."

There were already six seafood processors in town, so Glen and Tracy thought outside the box and bought a fish delivery round from a retiring fisherman.

In between deliveries, Glen would stop and chat to butchers and cafe and shop owners. Word spread about his fresh Coorong yelloweye mullet.

"He built it up from about 60kg of fillets a week to 120 within a couple of months," Tracy says. They'd catch and process to order.

"We didn't have to advertise. Word spread that we had good quality, we were reliable, and we looked after our customers."

Their Lakes and Coorong Fishery is a coastal inshore fishery, operating partly in the Coorong National Park, and a RAMSAR-listed wetland of international significance.

It has an ecosystem-based focus and was recognised nationally and internationally for its world-first environmental management plan in 1998. The supply chain is very short and maximises the quality of the

fish.

Their popular Coorong yelloweye mullet is available in numerous stores and they supply restaurants across Australia.

The industry isn't easy. Challenges include an increasing number of seals ripping up nets and mutilating the fish caught.

"Despite drought and the seals and various other issues, we've been able to keep the business running," Tracy says. "Now we focus a little bit on tourism."

Tours are a great way to get a glimpse into their world.

"People don't just want to rock up, eat some fish and leave. They want to find out how you do it and why you do it," she says.

Coorong Wild Seafood, 10 Yumali Rd, Meningie, 8578 1716, coorongwildseafood.com.au

Beach Organics

2 FROM little things, big things grow. Especially ideas. Barry Beach is devoted to the benefits of organic produce and wants to educate the world.

The laid-back chap lives on a permaculture farm near the seaside town of Port Elliot. Here, on a 4ha plot with Southern Ocean views, Barry produces NASAA-certified organic vegetables, herbs and fruit.

Each morning from Wednesday to Sunday, he handpicks a range of produce and drives the 80-odd km journey to his Beach Organics store and cafe on the edge of Adelaide's CBD.

The store at Bowden's Plant 4 is a labyrinth of flavours and aromas from the far corners of the globe. Everything is GM-free and grown and stored without artificial herbicides, pesticides or fertilisers.

Barry established his farm in 1983, after travelling the world and soaking up knowledge about sustainable farming practices.

When he returned to Australia and purchased his Middleton property, the paddocks were bare. More than 30 years of sustainable organic growing practices (and planting of thousands of native trees) followed.

Barry is dedicated to preserving the gastronomic and cultural knowledge of food artisans in South-East Asia. He set up the Beach Organics Traditional Farmers Network as a direct link to grassroots farmers in Indonesia, Africa, Bhutan and northern India. His store sells their products, including spices, green coffee beans and singleestate teas. He also sells products online and wholesale and loves to talk how each one is produced.

Workshops such as Baking With Spices are a great way to learn more about how to cook with the spices he stocks.

"Education is an important part of my business," he says.

"People are more interested in food provenance and the impact that food production has on the community.

"We have to do things differently and support more sustainable food production systems or we're in deep trouble as a society."

Beach Organics, Plant 4. Third Street, Bowden, beachorganics.com.au

Macro Group Australia

3 RAY Borda is on a mission to showcase kangaroo meat as a premium product for health-conscious consumers.

He studied mechanical engineering before changing paths and running Australia's first dedicated pet food business. Kangaroo was his No. 1 seller because it was lean and lasted longer than the other meats. The cogs started turning.

When Ray looked into food regulations, he discovered South Australia was the only one permitted to sell kangaroo meat for human consumption.

"I sold off all my shops, bought a manufacturing plant and started to produce kangaroo meat," Ray says. "Even though it said 'for human consumption', I knew people were buying it for their pets."

But the word got about. "People were saying, 'Gee, I love your kangaroo meat. Do you do any other cuts?'"

Ray started selling kangaroo meat into supermarkets and encouraged innovative chefs to use it. At the same time, he rewrote government guidelines and the code of practice.

Macro Meats was established in 1987 and now controls the world's largest retail distribution of wild-game kangaroo meat. It is the most sustainable, lean meat Australia produces.

Macro Meats works closely with governments to develop quality control and responsible harvesting procedures.

"I just want people to appreciate Australia's original natural protein," Ray says.

Of the 58 species of kangaroos, only four of the most abundant are commercially harvested. "They're free-roaming/freeliving animals and are taken from their own environment – it's very humane."

Animal welfare is important to Ray. "Even now, I'm working on lifting the national regulations and standards," he says.

Macro Meats exports to more than 50 countries. It has three brands, Paroo Kangaroo, a highend, restaurant-quality product used by chefs across Australia. K-ROO is the retail brand for everyday consumer to use at home, and then Macro Meats wholesale and export.

They're also branching out into tanned leather, using the hides to ensure nothing is wasted.

Macro Group Australia, 51-53 Lavinia St, Athol Park, macrogroupaustralia.com.au

SA Mushrooms

4 THIS family-run business holds the humble mushroom in the highest regard. According to Nick Femia, each mushroom produced by SA Mushrooms is precious.

"They are all delicately handpicked," the company's managing director says. "It's a one-touch system – so the picker picks it and puts it in the box. No one touches it again until the person in the shopping centre buys it."

The family business began with Nick's father, Sam, a greengrocer for 50 years. This was important for their growth. "We'd like to think we know exactly what they want," Nick says.

On a visit to a mushroom farm, they fell in love with the whole process, and went the distance to find out more.

"Holland is the world's mecca for mushrooms: the machinery, technology, computers ... From that visit we got back and decided we were going to buy our own land and develop our own mushroom farm."

It took five years to come to fruition. Nick did an extensive training course in Holland, visiting several Dutch farms. On his return, he worked for free for a mushroom farm in Queensland.

Nick's brothers Nat and Sam threw themselves into it and Sam Sr remains part of the business.

They operate out of a state-of-the-art, climate-controlled facility on the Adelaide Plains. The farm produces Swiss brown, white button and field mushrooms, and is a major supplier to Foodland stores.

They are also one of just two companies in Australia producing vitamin D mushrooms (they're given a short burst of light after harvest to boost vitamin D levels). Last month they launched a new sauce by Rosetta's Gourmet Kitchen, inspired by their late mother, Rosetta.

Nick says South Australians understand quality.

"In South Australia, you see a lot of beautiful cheeses and beautiful wines ... Our standard is higher and that allows for boutique companies to get off the ground then spread their wings nationally, like we have."

SA Mushrooms, 153 Tozer Rd, Waterloo

Corner, samushrooms.com.au



Eastbrook Vegetable Farms

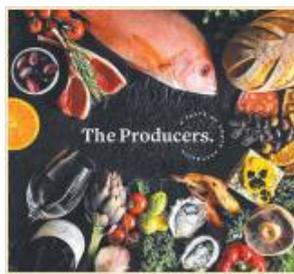
THEY'RE the vegetable people either love or hate. 5 "People usually have a very strong opinion one way or the other," Scott Samwell says. "It's a great conversation starter. When people find out I'm a brussels sprouts grower, they often ask how I make a living out of it." He laughs. "When I tell them we sell 50 tonnes of sprouts a week, it changes their perspective." Scott is the managing director of Eastbrook Vegetable Farms. About 90 per cent of their business is brussels sprout production. They have been growing premium-quality brussels and red darling sprouts for more than 60 years. Although a lot of new ideas have come into the farm practices over recent years, they still get up with the sun every morning and grow the vegetables as naturally as they can. The varieties on offer, however, have evolved. "I remember sitting at the table and being forced to eat these green, mushy things," Scott says, "It was horrible. The variety of sprouts is so different now. In fact, the varieties I grow now, my father didn't grow. This has only happened in the past 10 to 15 years." Eastbrook is still a family-managed farm. Brussels sprouts, kalettes and cabbages are grown at Mount Barker, Nairne and Langhorne Creek. Eastbrook is now one of the largest growers of brussels sprouts in Australia. They supply nationwide to outlets including Aldi,

Coles, Foodland and IGA. "Anywhere you find kalettes, that's us. We are the only growers of that in Australia," Scott says. The business is passionate about sustainability. "I know people say that, but we genuinely are," Scott says. "We want to be healthy, we want our soil to be better and we want our environment to be better, so we try to reduce waste and look at alternatives to plastic in the way we package our products. We use growing techniques where we reduce chemicals and use integrated pest management."

Eastbrook Vegetable Farms, 195 Bald Hills Rd, Mount Barker eastbrook.com.au



"Locally sourced" is a proud boast on many menus. It means so much more when you can meet those locals



SOUTH Australians are rightly proud of their fabulous foods and wines – and it's no longer enough to know that it tastes good. Consumers are increasingly aware of where it came from, how it's harvested, if it's sustainable ... What's the story behind our dinners?

The Producers: A Taste of South Australia is a showcase of 100 top food producers, from bread and seafood, chocolate to gin. Written by The Advertiser wine writer Katie Spain, it links paddock and plate.

On August 19, the delicious. Produce awards, sponsored by Harvey Norman, are announced in Sydney. South Australia has a number of finalists in the four categories of earth, dairy, paddock and sea.

Judged by a team of chefs and food experts as producing the best in the country, the awards salute the amazing work that goes into putting our dinner on the table, at home or in our best restaurants.

The stories in The Producers explain why, in this state, we are spoilt for choice.

The Producers, RRP \$34.95, available at the National Wine Centre, Dillons Bookshop in Norwood and online from budmedia.com.au