

Farm Gate Trail Round Up – 29th January 2005

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IN SEASON ON THE TRAIL

Good Morning Simon – welcome back to Saturday morning!

The apple season has just commenced – and you can pick up varieties like Anna, Akane, Tydeman Early and Gravenstein and of course we still have all those delicious berries – strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and blueberries. Plenty of stone fruit – Both white (Fragars) and yellow peaches (Jersey Queens), Friar plums and Queen Rosa plums, black plums and nectarines. This week there are some great tasting seedless watermelons. Plenty of salad veges – eggplant, zucchini and squash and snow peas and tomatoes are fantastic .. all washed down with a great bottle of wine from one of our wineries.

This week I thought I would give a run down on a very interesting project that is being undertaken in the Hawkesbury – the Hawkesbury Agricultural Retention Through Diversification and Clustering project – HARTDaC.

Hawkesbury Harvest is a stakeholder along with H'bury City Council, NSW Agriculture, the University of Western Sydney as well as both State and Federal Government Depts. The project will run to June this year and has been managed by Victoria Agriculture.

What is the aim of the project?

The aim is to retain agriculture through diversification and clustering - establish an approach to minimize the impact of higher population and urban expansion. (By 2019 we are expecting 500000 people in western Sydney). The project hopes to provide a showcase in the Sydney Basin, that peri-urban agriculture can be sustainable and provide social, economic and environmental benefits in an environmentally sensitive area.

How many farmers are involved in the project?

There are ten farmers involved – some have been farming for a long time, and some, like us are recent, and there are others who are starting out. We are trying to build a farmer network which of course will continue once the project is finished – there is a wealth of knowledge amongst existing farmers and then there are those who have come into the industry with different skills – marketing, PR, management, accounting and so the project is looking at more than just the biophysical aspects of land use and crop suitability.

What are the sort of things that the project looks at?

Each individual property has their soil analysed, climate data logged (chill days, humidity, rain and temperature); we attend seminars – such as soil, water, along with visits to participating farms. It is still early days yet to make assessments of what may be grown, some are expanding existing plantings, eg lavender, raspberries, mushrooms, cherries, and others are looking at crops such as winegrapes, native bush foods, essential oils, truffles ...

So we have some challenging but exciting times ahead in the Hawkesbury and this project in the future can be expanded into other areas in the Sydney Basin.

EVENTS

Mt. Tomah Dec. -Jan – Feb

1. **Curly Caley Quercus Quest** Calling all adventurers. Can you solve the clues hidden around the Garden to help explorer Curly Caley Quercus find his way? An adventure for the whole family.
2. **Exploring Collectors – Two Centuries of Botanical Discovery**. The exhibition features objects from botanists from three eras of collecting – 18th, 19th 20th centuries. Highlights include original specimens, maps, images and tools associated with exploration and plant collecting.

Update on fruit and veges in season

For the latest update of fruit and veges in season from our farms and to download any of the seasonal itineraries as well as the whole map, go to the website

www.hawkesburyharvest.com.au

All the information on the Farm Gate Trail will be on the website or from Hawkesbury Valley Tourism Office at Clarendon on **4588 5895**, where along with the Farm Gate map, your listeners can pick up the notes of today's roundup

Best Days to Drive the Trail

Friday or Saturday are the recommended days for self-drive tours of the Farm Gate Trail.

Fruit on the Trail

Apples – Pinecrest Orchard, Enniskillen Orchard

Valencia Oranges,– Penrith Valley Oranges (**open Fridays only till 1st week of February**), Enniskillen Orchard and Orange Spot

Nectarines, Peaches, Plums - Enniskillen Orchard and Orange Spot, Waddell's Orchard, Galston

Apricots – Enniskillen and Orange Spot

Pajeros Strawberries – fresh and frozen – Strawberry Farm, Vineyard, 359 Galston

Strawberries, Enniskillen Orchard, The Orange Spot

Raspberries – Enniskillen Orchard

Veges on the Trail

Roma and round Tomatoes, corn, potatoes, lettuce, rhubarb, eggplant, beans, snow peas, mushrooms, cabbage, beetroot, Lebanese cucumbers, shallots, capsicum, eggplant, broccoli, butternut pumpkins.

Other Produce – Food & Wine

Wine, port including white port, aleatico; Verjus; Goat cheese & yoghurt; baked crisp breads including lavosh, honey, apple juice, free range eggs, ice cream with real fruit, fruit rollups with fruit fresh from the orchard. Jams, pickles and sauces and the range from the native bush tucker foods. Peking ducks, also sausages, breast fillet, Maryland & whole ducks; abattoir and butcher – large range of beef, pork and lamb, goat, venison and ostrich. Spring Water and Silver Perch.

Other Produce – Fibre & Flora

Koi and Goldfish, silver perch, field roses, Crepe Myrtles, pelargoniums and geraniums, alpacas & alpaca products such as jumpers, scarves etc. Open gardens and galleries with pottery, paintings and bowls and platters.