Crafted Cider

Inside:
Soil to Oil
Isopods Inspire
Driving the Economy
Soil to Oil

The world’s largest distiller of sandalwood oil is right here in Albany.

Mt Romance – The Sandalwood Factory has been producing Australian sandalwood oil and beauty products for more than 15 years, building a range of brands around the globe including leading brands in New York and Paris.

Mt Romance produces more than 250,000 premium beauty and lifestyle products each year.

This range features Australian sandalwood, an ancient botanical known for its beautiful fragrance and therapeutic benefits. The company’s ethos is to get as much from the unique natural resource. They call this process Whole-tree Utilisation.

Sandalwood oil has many natural benefits including: anti-inflammatory, anti-viral and antibacterial properties, all proven by scientific tests.

Sandalwood nuts – a natural oil is extracted, offering skin smoothing and soothing properties, ideal for anti-aging cosmetics.

Heartwood – used for carvings and religious worship, this fragrant wood can also be processed and distilled to extract a pure essence oil.

Spent charger – the remaining wood material (after the oil has been extracted) is processed again to remove more oils and is then used to make candles and incense in Asia.

Sandalwood oil – the pure essential oil, one of the most valuable in the world and is used in therapeutic, cosmetic and perfume products. Nearly half of all fragrance products worldwide contain sandalwood due to the luxurious base note it creates.

Australian sandalwood occurs naturally in the southern part of WA extending south from the Margaret River, east beyond the border with SA and south to the coast. This is the world’s largest natural resource of Australian sandalwood.

Found in the northern outback of WA, sandalwood is a parasitic tree requiring a host tree, usually a native acacia, to sustain it through its early years. These host trees need to be established for 1-2 years with sandalwood nuts planted within 1m of the host. Pre-germinated nuts are used. It is vital that the frugal growing points are not damaged during planting. Once established, these root tips on the frugal root of the sandalwood invade the feeder system of the host trees, extracting water and nutrients. This junction is very fragile. It is vital that the tree is protected.

The WA native sandalwood flowers from January to April, and the seed matures from August to December. On average, a healthy tree can bear 250-300 nuts each year. Production is carried out by decades including large trees starting production nuts at four years. Ill
She’ll be Apples

W ve been making cider the wrong way for years.

So says Denmark Heritage Cider Proprietor Stuart Douglass, who believes Australians have the wrong impression of what ‘real’ cider tastes like.

Traditional cider, the way Mr Douglass produces it, isn’t that sweet at all.

But he says it’s not really cut out we associate apple cider with a sugary palate.

According to Mr Douglass, most of the larger Australian cider companies use rejects eating apples that the Rest of Cider and Woolsworth reject.

While it’s a great way to recycle what isn’t being used and it helps farmers keep their costs down, these eating apples are too acidic to make boozes out of, so a lot of sugar needs to be added.

“There is this unusual almost unique Australian situation where eating apples are being used to make cider,” Mr Douglass said.

“Even to the point where it’s apple concentrate shipped from China.

“If you use eating apples, they are high in acidity, but you don’t want that in an alcoholic drink. They make it so sweet to disguise these acidic flavours, whereas ours is a fully fermented dry cider that is low in acid. It is very, very different.

“Only a fraction of cider – I think it’s less than one per cent – in Australia is used making cider apples.

“Mr Douglass’ 10-hectares Denmark property is home to the only commercial-sized apple cider orchard in WA, growing traditional varieties like Brown Snout, Bramley, Dabinett, Yarlington Mill and James G.

But finding these varieties was far from straight forward.

Back in 2007 when Mr Douglass was trying to source apple cider trees to plant on his farm, WA had very strict quarantine rules which meant he could not source from government research centres in Merriam and Taresan.

Despite not knowing where these trees would grow well in Denmark, the company planted out in mid-2008 and then went through a painstaking process of discovering the weaknesses, pests and diseases which affected the fruit.

Against all the odds, Denmark Heritage Cider completed its first harvest in 2013, working with award-winning local winemakers Harewood Estate to produce its first vintage of traditionally-crafted ciders.

Mr Douglass said he had since found it difficult to market his product in Australia when the preconceived idea was that all cider was sweet.

“Breaking through the prejudice that the industry has created for itself is very hard,” he said.

“The people who are making the eating apple cider they don’t care because they’ve developed a market and got a cheap product. It’s basically a way for years.

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TO SUSTAIN the world with bugs in the goal of Albany man Edward Metcalfe, but it is not as simple as switching your diet from lamb chops to insect stew.

Mr Metcalfe was inspired to begin his Slater Power project a couple of years ago following the publication of a United Nations paper, which considered the future of food security and alternative measures to current food sources. When raised in proper conditions, Mr Metcalfe says insects require far less resources to produce than conventional livestock, such as sheep and cows.

So, his goal is to raise isopods – slaters in particular – on hardy perennial plants, create an alternative fodder mix to use as animal feed, and further introduce insects as another food source for humans.

“The idea is not to compete against conventional agriculture, but to have another option in the farmer’s toolkit,” Mr Metcalfe said.

“An as the world’s population increases, more food has to be produced for it.”

This land available for conventional agriculture is not getting any larger, in fact it’s shrinking.”

Mr Metcalfe currently has slaters living and breeding on a mixture of gum leaves and wattle leaves.

He selected these plants because the trees can grow in harsh conditions not suitable for staple crops and fodder.

An example is using vines to cover the shed his slaters are in for temperature control, rather than using a reverse-cycle air conditioning unit. His main focus at the moment is getting his slaters in for temperature control, rather than using a reverse-cycle air conditioning unit. His main focus at the moment is getting his slaters in for temperature control, rather than using a reverse-cycle air conditioning unit. His main focus at the moment is getting his slaters in for temperature control, rather than using a reverse-cycle air conditioning unit.

“Set and forget is the ideal I am aiming for,” Mr Metcalfe said.

“Fodder like Tagasaste is fine but it doesn’t last long enough so you keep on having to add in a bit more and so labour costs go up. “Keeping track of all these containers is done by the Slater City software I have developed.”

In doing this project, Mr Metcalfe hopes to leave behind is “legacy of goodness.

“I don’t think of a better way of doing that than devising a new method of feeding people,” he said.

“I would also like to put Australia on a sustainable course that is profitable.

“Vary often when an environmental issue emerges there is the mindset of, ‘We have a problem therefore you can’t’. It’s far more progressive to say, ‘we have a problem therefore you can’.”

“Take for example pastoral leases in Australia it is to be used for pastoral purposes.

“In short, the government restricts what you can do.

“I think a better approach is to say, here is this parcel of land – we want the environmental performance indicator to remain in this range and the more it is to be with life in it... now go and do your thing and try and make a dollar, whatever it may be.”

Mr Metcalfe knows of several isopod breeders who currently use slaters to feed pet reptiles and chickens.

He said schools can easily make their own isopod containers and learn about biology, nutrition recycling and how green waste can be reused.

“Western societies, 30 per cent of food is wasted,” Mr Metcalfe said.

“This waste stream is being directed to some amazing insects, such as black soldier fly larvae.

“However, once this 30 per cent is fully used, production hits a brick wall.

“Not only can this help in absorbing carbon dioxide, but it will also provide extra habitat for native animals,” he said.

“The more people there are doing this, the more chance there is of someone hitting the jackpot.”

People interested can follow Mr Metcalfe’s research progress online at slaterpower.eu3.biz

Words: Ashleigh Fielding
Photos: Jen Metcalfe

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“On the flip side, transport is a growing industry – in primary production, new technology, value-adding and increasing demand for food will only see this sector further develop.

“The Great Southern is a very reliable place to work, farmers have good soil and generally reliable rainfall, mild climate and a landscape in which is a great place to live.

Without transport, people would not eat, and the economy would fail to function.”

Mr Pavlovich wears various hats in the Plantagenet community. Not only is he Shire President, he is a champion behind the wheel in the Super Sedans speedway competition. Through Southern Haulage he also supports many local organisations including the Narrikup Golf Club, Kendenup Golf Club, Cranbrook Show and Tambellup Bowling Club.

Driving the Economy

WE OFTEN hear that trucks are the life-line of Australia but perhaps not all of us realised just how important they were until the recent bushfires that ravaged the country.

With trucking unable to reach certain areas requiring product replenishment, resources started to quickly dry up and supplies started to dwindle, leaving clients vulnerable and desperate for help.

Now with the COVID-19 crisis affecting Australia, trucks are again playing a vital part in keeping the economy and communities alive.

One of those front-line trucking businesses is Southern Haulage, which although based in the small town of Mount Barker, transports up to one million tonnes of agricultural produce and fertiliser across the state annually.

The Southern Haulage journey began back in 1961 with brothers Peter and Tom Pavlovich. Back then it was known as Pavlovich Bros Transport.

The pair started hauling bags of fertiliser to their local farming community and this effort has now exponentially exploded; originally starting with just one five-tonne Bedford truck, the company now has 58 road trains, two woodchip chipping systems, civil road works crews and an engineering team.

Fourth generation head of the operation Chris Pavlovich says family is very much the key to the success of Southern Haulage, working alongside his children to continue the Pavlovich legacy. He also takes their long-term staff as family and their greatest asset.

“The vision has never been based on return to shareholders but the passion to go to work every day and play a part in the region,” Mr Pavlovich said.

“Our management team never wish to let any stakeholders down so the work ethic to perform has been an ultimate driver for mutual success. “Our ultimate goal is for the greater area to grow and prosper not only for today but to secure our future – employment growth and families are fundamental for regional Australia and Southern Haulage is working hard to make a little difference in our communities.”

A trucker’s life is one controlled by long hours behind the wheel but without the dedication of truck drivers, things just wouldn’t move around the country as they need to.

“We have to be the best at what we do, or the competition will eat us alive,” Mr Pavlovich said.

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Words: Ashleigh Fielding
Controlling Ferals

THE Australian bushlands have been under threat for decades by invasive species destroying native flora and fauna. The effects are devastating, causing immense environmental, economic, and cultural damage across the country, as well as being the number one cause of native animal extinctions.

A recent grant awarded to Bush Heritage Australia of $775,762 by Lotterywest is designed to combat this, funding the launch of a new project to control three predators between the Fitzgerald River and the Stirling Range national parks. The aim is to tip the balance in favour of WA’s precious native species over the span of five years.

Bush Heritage Ecologist Angela Sanders said the project is what to begin bringing native species back from the brink of extinction.

“Our native fauna are really under threat from these introduced predators,” she said. “A lot of our native wildlife in Australia have already become extinct from pressure from these predators and disease. Feral cats consume the most amazing amount of wildlife out in the bush that if we want to recover some of our species we need to reduce their numbers.”

Native species such as the chuditch which is a small carnivore that lives in the South West have been severely affected – over the past 12 years or so we’ve had one photo of one on our remote camera, but they should be everywhere.”

The innovative project is taking a new approach to combat the invasive predators by doing an integrated control instead of targeting each species individually. “This will be a first for us,” Ms Sanders said. “I can’t speak for eastern states, but in WA basically what we’ve been doing for a long time is controlling one species at a time, but what we found out early on is when you start controlling foxes, the cat numbers go up. “So it’s not good to have no foxes and lots of cats, so now what we’re going to do is get rid of them at the same time, and just before the foxes are finished with their bounty, we will be baiting outside our reserves and into farmland,” she said.

“Foxes are a huge menace to the farmers that have sheep, so it’s really exciting having the landowners involved in this project and getting the community together in this integrated control.”

The project is not only a good opportunity for the animals but will also open two new job opportunities for people to get involved.

“We’ve got two new positions as part of the grant which is fabulous,” Ms Sanders said. “We’re recruiting right now for a part-time project officer, and later in the year we’ll be employing a full-time field officer.”

The project aims to roll-out in August.

Ms Sanders said one of the best parts of the project is the amount of community engagement it involves. “We’ve got most of the landowners in that area on-board and that’s really exciting for us because we’re not just going to be baiting outside our reserves, we’re going to be baiting outside our reserves and into farmland,” she said.

“Feral predators move across the farm and it’s really exciting having the landowners involved in this project and getting the community together in this integrated control.”

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“I’m a small carnivore that lives in the South West we need to reduce their numbers.”

The project will cover an area of 37,000 hectares, including Bush Heritage’s Chemereenup Reserve and half a dozen farms, supported by complementary work in the Conakrspop and Peruup nature reserves that are also in the project area.

Ms Sanders said one of the best parts of the project is “This integration is essential to the project, as it minimises the unintended consequences of removing one predator at a time.”

“The fox control has been very successful in the Fitzgerald National Park and places like Cape Arid, but what they’ve found is the cat numbers increase and it’s been responsible in pushing the ground parrot towards extinction, so you need to be careful about dealing with this trio,” Ms Sanders said.

“The project aims to roll-out in August.”

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Words: Charlotte Wooldridge

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