

Queensland taste

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THE SCENIC ROUTE

Producing everything from cultured butter and beef to macadamias and muntries, Queensland's Scenic Rim is becoming one of the state's most exciting growing regions, writes **Anooska Tucker-Evans**

As Queenslanders increasingly look to follow the paddock-to-plate philosophy, supporting local farmers and producers, growing areas around the state are booming.

One area really taking off is the Scenic Rim. Stretching from Tamborine Mountain and Canungra through the Lost World and Mt Barney, across to Broomah and Kalbar, the region produces everything from coffee and cauliflower to beef and beer.

Its diverse offering will be celebrated at the upcoming Eat Local Week festival (June 29-July 7), with a series of lunches, dinners, markets, tastings, cooking demonstrations, masterclasses and more, kicking off with a number of on-site events from June 15.

Ahead of the festival of flavour, we put the spotlight on the region, showcasing just a few of the tremendous growers, farmers and producers that make up the area's diverse food scene.

YASABEL COTTAGE KITCHEN

Whether it's for their orange almond blossom syrup cakes, rum and raisin brioche scrolls or delicious herb and olive bread, Yasabel Cottage

Kitchen always attracts a crowd. Run by husband and wife Cameron and Hals Dunbar, the pair lived in Bahrain in the Persian Gulf, where Cameron worked as executive chef to the royal family, before moving to Tamborine Mountain after seeing a block of land for sale on the internet.

Now the pair uses the best of seasonal ingredients grown around Mt Tamborine, such as rhubarb, cumsquats, tangelos, lemons and oranges to create their range of best-selling jams, chutneys, baked goods, artisan breads and gluten-free products.

They sell their fare at the Mt Tamborine Green Shed market each Sunday and at the Tamborine Mountain State School Markets on the last Sunday of each month. Habi's popular cakes are also available at Tamborine Mountain's seafood cafe The Local Codfather and Groundwork Cafe in Nerang.

WILDE FOODS

Photographer Lisa Wood always loved growing native plants, but when she met her now husband, avocado grower Fred Maney, the pair turned her hobby into a thriving business.

With Maney's agricultural know-how and Wood's passion, the couple began producing the likes of native mulberries and ribberries, native ginger, midyims, finger limes, muntries, desert yams and much more. She also grows saffron - the gold of the spice world.

Her main customers are chefs and restaurants, but the public can buy her goods through her website, wildefoods.com.au

VALLEY PRIDE PRODUCE

Andrew and David Scholl are fifth-generation farmers, living and working on the family property in the Fassifern Valley. The brothers grow vegetables and herbs, such as basil, kale, parsley and coriander, which they wash and bunch neatly for market, or pre-cut for local clubs, pubs, restaurants and hospitals.

The family also owns and operates Arts Fruit Market and Dave's Deli and cafe at Broomah, which has become hugely popular for its array of traditional, house-made eat-in and takeaway meals, such as soups, lasagnes and pizzas. The meals have become a terrific way of using up the farm's leftover produce so they eliminate waste.

TOMMERUP'S DAIRY FARM

This beautiful, family-run, 4000sq m property in Kerry is much more than just a dairy farm. While producing lush, creamy milk from their herd of jersey cows is the primary business of owners Kay and Dave Tommerup, low milk prices have led the couple to diversify into open-range chicken, milk-fed pigs and pork products, sheep, goats and a booming farmstay operation. Late last month, they also launched a micro-creamery, where they use milk from their cows to produce cultured butter, butter milk, cream, creme fraiche and butter milk ricotta. All their delicious farm-to-fork products are available at their on-site larder, with several top restaurants across the state, such as Stokelhouse Q, also using their dairy range.

tommerupsfarmstay.com.au

TAMBORINE DRAGONFRUIT FARM

Since acai bowls started flooding the cafe scene, dragonfruit or pitaya has become one of the most on-trend fruits around.

John and June Baker have been riding high on its popularity with their farm in Tamborine, which boasts 1000 trees per acre. After initially



finding much of the fruit they bought at the shops tasteless, they began cross-pollinating different plants to produce tastier fruit.

"I crossed a cactus with a dragonfruit and it tastes like rose water," says June. "Every year I get a new variety."

Between January and June each year the family opens their farm gate to the public, selling fruit, cuttings, plants and jams and sharing their knowledge about the exotic fruit.

tamborineadragonfruitfarm.com.au

SCENIC RIM ORGANICS

Stephen Pennell farmed conventionally for more than 30 years. But after becoming unwell, his wife Angela convinced him to begin farming organically.

Now the pair produces a range of beautiful organic veg such as silverbeet, three types of kale, shallots, leeks, broccoli and sugar snap peas. Their produce is available from their roadside stall alongside Angela's homemade jams and chutneys.

scenicrimorganics.com.au

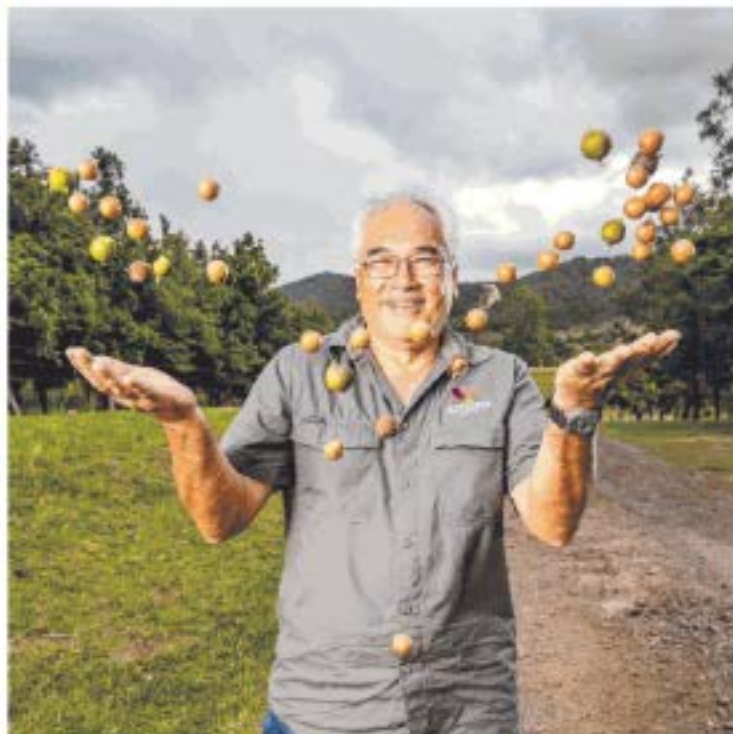
MOFFATT FRESH PRODUCE

For nearly a century, the Moffatt family has farmed the alluvial soil of the Fassifern Valley in Tarome to become one of the country's largest suppliers of carrots and onions. Committed to sustainable farming practices, requiring minimal chemicals and fertilisers, they produce a whopping 7000 tonnes of onions from October to February each year. Quality and food safety is paramount to their business, which means their carrots arrive at retailers within 24 hours of being harvested. They also run beef cattle and have a small hay business on the side.

moffattcarrots.com.au

TAMBORINE MOUNTAIN COFFEE PLANTATION

This micro-coffee plantation and estate at Tamborine Mountain has been created to provide a completely local experience. Grown without the use of sprays and chemicals, all the beans are hand-picked and roasted on-site. Visitors can taste the coffee at the plantation's



LOCALLY SOURCED - (Clockwise from opposite page) Kay Tommerup at Tommerup's Dairy Farm and Creamery at Harrville, Wide Foods grows produce such as finger limes, macadamia and honey producer Paul Lee of Greenlee Farm at Canungra, and pigs at Tommerup farm. Pictures: Luke Marsden

cafe, which is open daily for breakfast and lunch, or take part in a crop-to-cup tour, where they will learn how the coffee is grown, picked, roasted and processed. The business has also recently launched a body scrub range using coffee grinds in an effort to reduce waste, and this winter will begin serving special coffee-fuelled cocktails.

tamborinemountaincoffee.com.au

GREENLEE FARM

Husband and wife team Paul and Robyn Lee first moved to Canungra in 1995, establishing a small macadamia orchard with just 500 trees. However, with macadamias slow to fruit, it would take them five years to see their first yield - just a few buckets of nuts - and another two until there were enough nuts to sell. These days they use sustainable, biological farming methods to produce their macadamias, which are sold



through retail stores, local wineries, markets and festivals across the Scenic Rim. With bees an integral part of macadamia pollination, the couple has also diversified into honey, producing a beautifully mild raw honey, as well as honey with macadamias and a macadamia brittle.

greenleafarm.com.au

GIBB BROS

Brothers Tony and Nick Gibb are third-generation vegetable farmers with properties in the Fassifern Valley and the Darling Downs, near Toowoomba. The two areas' different climates mean the pair can grow a consistent and quality supply of vegetables all year long, focusing on their Toowoomba farm in the hot summer months and their Scenic Rim property in the cooler months. The brothers primarily grow varieties of lettuce, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, silverbeet, pak choy and kale.

gibbbros.com.au

DUCK CREEK HONEY

Kath Andersen first became interested in beekeeping while watching her neighbours tend to their apiary. She asked to learn the tricks of the trade and quickly fell in love. Now she has turned her interest into a budding business, specialising in the liquid gold and fresh honeycomb, ideal for cheese platters. Duck Creek Honey is currently stocked at VK Everyday's in Beaudesert, Canungra Hub Cafe & Deli, and at The Vintage Pickle in North Tamborine.

For more information on Eat Local Week and Scenic Rim producers, see eatlocalweek.com.au

BEST BITES SCENIC RIM WINERIES

AHEAD OF EAT LOCAL WEEK (JUNE 29-JULY 7), ANOOSKA TUCKER-EVANS LOOKS AT SOME OF THE SCENIC RIM'S MOST INTERESTING WINERIES TO VISIT



BUNJURGEN ESTATE VINEYARD

Only 10km from Boonah, this 24ha vineyard and farm features 2200 vines, as well as seasonal crops. The family-friendly property belonging to David McMaugh allows visitors to wander through the vines, as well as experience the abundant wildlife, including everything from wedge-tailed eagles to possums and kangaroos. The cellar door is where you'll taste their range of wines and barrel-aged ports, but it's their pink verjuice that has become the true star, loved by many high-profile chefs.

121 Brent Road, Bunjungen

O'REILLY'S CANUNGRA VALLEY VINEYARDS

Almost a tourist attraction first and winery second, this vineyard has become the ultimate day trip venue for couples and families. Guests can do a wine tasting in the historic homestead before having lunch at Vintage Restaurant, which is open Friday-Sunday, or grab a picnic hamper (pictured) and relax in the lush, green fields overlooking the creek with platypi. For the kids there's also the Mountview Alpaca Farm, where you can feed and walk an alpaca.

852 Lamington National Park Rd, Canungra

WITCHES FALLS WINERY

A must for the Mt Tamborine day-tripper, this quaint winery and cellar door draws crowds keen to taste a tipple or two while chilling out on the green lawns with a platter of locally made fromage. The only winery in the region to receive a James Halliday 5 RED star rating, it is known for its cabernet sauvignon and vignier. Guests can taste these and more for \$10 per person.

79 Main Western Rd, Tamborine Mountain

SARABAH ESTATE

Run by husband-and-wife Cameron and Toni-Maree Bishop, this winery in the foothills of Lamington National Park is worth a visit for the views alone. Surrounded by rolling green hills, it has become a popular spot for weddings and day trips, with an on-site bistro serving brunch and lunch Friday-Sunday (except when booked out for private functions). Witches Falls winemaker Jon Heslop creates the property's vino, all of which can be sampled at the restaurant, in their secret garden, olive grove or chalet.

46 Rymore Rd, Sarabah

MASON WINES

Located in the Gold Coast Hinterland, this picturesque property is one of three by Mason Wines, with other venues in Ballandean (where the bulk of their grapes are sourced) and Montville. Though the wine is made in the Granite Belt, visitors can still enjoy a tasting experience at the cellar door, with views over the hinterland from the deck. Or better yet, try the wines while dining at the restaurant, which was once an old winery and barrel room. There are also two cottages for accommodation if you fancy an overnight stay or weekend away.

32 Hartley Road, North Tamborine

IN SEASON

GET FRUITY

Have avocados from north Queensland are at the peak of their season, while Innisfail-grown bananas are plentiful. Queensland-grown navel oranges are at their best. Other citrus fruits like lemons and limes are both well supplied. All varieties of apple are eating well, but the sweet and crunchy Pink Lady is the pick of the bunch. Sunshine Coast-grown pineapple is another favourite. Strawberries are picking up and although only small quantities are coming out of Caboolture and the Sunny Coast, quality is good. Raspberries are continuing their strong season, while there are solid supplies of Packham pears, passionfruit, nashi, watermelon, dragonfruit and chestnuts. Rockmelons and blueberries are in short supply. On their way out are Queensland Imperial mandarins, custard apples, persimmons and green grapes (though red are still available).

EAT YOUR VEG

In vegies, the markets are well supplied with beans, broccoli, eggplant. Askan vegetables.

cabbage, wombok, kale, lettuce, mushrooms, celery, chillies, garlic, ginger, cucumber, okra and fennel. Rosemary, mint and coriander are the best-looking herbs this week. Make use of great-value rocket, salad leaves, shallot, silver beet, spinach and watercress in warming pies like spanakopta with feta cheese. Other great buys include red capsicum, cauliflower, zucchini, onions, radishes, potatoes and brussels sprouts. For something different, try green kohlrabi or the excellent rhubarb coming from Mt Tamborine. Supplies of fresh broad beans, snow peas, spring onions and corn are decreasing.

TOP PICK

Sweet potato from Bundaberg is this week's best buy. Gold sweet potato is most common in Queensland, but you can also find red, white and purple varieties. Packed with beta carotene and fibre, they are perfect for everything from mash to fritters.

*Info from Brisbane Produce Market

