

Taste

A dinkum organic future

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become organic through the major growth pain period.”

Greens leader Peg Putt went to the UK in 1999, and was told the Tesco and Sainsbury's supermarket chains there had real difficulty sourcing produce in their off-season. She believes it is a shame the Tasmanian Government has not done more to “take advantage of the fabulous advantages we have here with organic and GE-free produce” to gain markets.

She said now that process growers are in such peril, “you wish we had been securing those markets for the past five years, but it still is my firm view that we should be doing it”. However, when she came back from the UK in 1999, Putt put the word out that UK supermarkets would take any organic produce they could find. The only response to her call came from Terence Rattray, who had a paddockful of swedes to sell. Rattray was excited about the sale, because, at the time, the exchange rate meant he could offer a very good price on his swedes. He talked to UK supermarket buyers, and the prospects looked good, but then he was told they had had a rethink.

“They said they did not want to bring product from that far away if they could possibly help it,” he said. “And they had organised contracts with Spanish organic growers for all their cold-climate vegetables.

“It's quite at odds with what the Australian supermarkets are doing at the moment — sourcing the cheapest product from anywhere in the world. They [in the UK] had made a decision that they did not want to bring in product from the other side of the world.”

Benson says Argentina exports 10 times as many organic onions as Australia. Egypt exports 400 tonnes of organic onions to Europe. “We are miniscule,” he said.

Why bother being organic? “You have to be committed to it,” said Benson. “Where we get pleasure out of it is when we see major improvements in our soil, our plant health is improving rapidly and prices are better, but our costs are also up.”

To weed onions by hand twice a year costs the Bensons about \$6000. Onions are heavy feeders and a good proportion of them don't form, whereas a conventional farmer could encourage them to bulb with a spray of fungicide. Onions and carrots in a conventional crop are never hand-weeded.

“I do it because I care, I care about farming, I care about the soil, I care about plant health, animal health and human health,” said Benson. “At the end of the day a lot of work we do goes unnoticed by people. We do it for the love of farming, doing good for people, not necessarily for being known for it.”

Jackson and Rattray both gave away farming brassicas and “left it to the experts” — the Bensons, but they have been growing broccoli for five years, and only in the past 12 months have they been viable. Conventionally grown broccoli probably is the vegetable that receives the most sprays, which goes directly on to the florets. And it's very hard to get chemicals out — you can't take a stiff scrubbing brush to broccoli.

A meeting in Sydney last month hosted by the Organic Federation of Australia looked at having a single logo to represent organic foods — which would be helpful to consumers, given that there are so many certifying bodies, and also to growers.

The meeting also pushed for domestic rules for organic produce. At the moment only exports are covered by strict compliance. Standards set by Standards Australia would be very useful. Now, it's a case of buyer beware because anyone can call their product organic. Consumers should ask “who are you certified with?” or look for logos of TOP, NASAA, BFA and such on products. If a grower has gone to the trouble and expense of becoming a certified organic grower they are not in the least shy about displaying that certification.

Bone building



EASY CALCIUM HIT: Yoghurt crumble crunch makes a great snack.

Yoghurt crumble crunch

¼ cup natural muesli

1 cup canned fruit in natural juice (try plums, fruit salad, pears, peaches, apricots etc)

200g tub reduced-fat vanilla yoghurt

Cinnamon to taste

Layer muesli, fruit and yoghurt into a small serving cup. Dust with cinnamon and serve. Serves three children or two adults. Make these cups in disposable containers for a quick on the run snack.

Creamy tuna and spinach pasta

400g macaroni pasta

Cooking oil spray

1 small red onion, cut into thin strips or finely diced

1 clove garlic, crushed

375g can reduced-fat evaporated milk

1 tbsp cornflour, dissolved in 1 tbsp water

425g can tuna in spring water, drained

80g baby spinach leaves

¼ cup grated parmesan cheese

2 tbsp grated parmesan cheese extra for tasting

Cook pasta in a large pot of rapidly boiling water until al dente. Drain. Lightly spray cooking oil in a saucepan. Add onions and garlic and cook until tender. Add evaporated milk and heat until mixture boils. Gradually stir in cornflour paste and cool until thickened. Stir in tuna, spinach, parmesan and pasta and heat through. Serve topped with extra parmesan. Serves eight children or four adults.

Parmesan crusted chicken nuggets

½ cup polenta

⅓ cup finely grated parmesan or romano cheese

2 small skinless chicken fillets, cut into chunks

200g natural yoghurt

1 small lebanese cucumber, peeled, seeded and finely diced

1 small clove garlic, crushed

Pepper to taste

Combine polenta and parmesan in a bowl. Dip the chicken in parmesan flavoured polenta. Place onto baking paper-lined tray and bake at 200C for 10 minutes or until cooked and golden.

Combine yoghurt, cucumber and garlic to make tzatziki. Season to taste. Serve nuggets with tzatziki and green salad.



Eating in

JUDITH SWEET

THIS is National Healthy Bones Week and that focus gives us an opportunity to consider the importance of calcium in our diet.

As age advances and unhealthy bones begin to ache and hamper activity and enjoyment of life, the message for this week is well heeded.

Dairy Australia has been involved in research on the requirements of calcium in the daily diet to ensure healthy bones.

If there is insufficient calcium in the foods we eat, the body withdraws the required calcium from our bones, which results in weakening them. It is particularly important in childhood when bones are going through periods of rapid growth. From birth to puberty, bone mass increases about sevenfold and then a further three times during puberty. Unhealthy bones will result in easy fractures and the possibility of osteoporosis in later life. It's a case of prevention being better than cure.

Dairy foods are easy to include in the daily diet — unless there's a problem with intolerance to dairy foods or a dislike of them.

A little imagination is required to disguise dairy food if it's not liked and it is advisable to discuss alternative calcium-rich additions to the diet if there is a dairy intolerance.

Dairy Australia suggest three serves of dairy foods daily are needed for strong, healthy bones. (A serve is regarded as 250ml of milk or 200g of yoghurt or 40g cheese.)

Freezing milkshakes and yoghurt can make them more appealing or include milk and yoghurt in sauces. Add yoghurt and cream cheese to dips and serve with fresh vegetable strips. Cheese makes a tasty addition to muffins, soup and sandwiches, combined with other snack foods or in omelets, frittatas and scrambled eggs. Top casseroles and pizzas with cheese and use ricotta in pasta dishes and desserts. In winter, porridge can be made with milk instead of water. Warm milk drinks with a spoonful of honey and a grating of nutmeg are a relaxing and delicious, nutritious drink at bedtime.

For more information about daily requirements check out the website www.healthybones.com.au

In today's recipe for creamy tuna and spinach pasta reduced-fat evaporated milk has been used to give a creamy effect without the fat or kilojoule levels of cream. Full-cream milk can be substituted but this results in a slightly less creamy dish.

MON-FRI 9am-6pm, SAT & SUN 9am-6pm

ALL SHOPPERS WELCOME!

*** CERTIFIED ***
ORGANIC BANANAS
\$3.40 KG

SPECIALS 10/8 - 16/8

Crisp Tasmanian Carrots	\$1.00 (1kg)
Prepacked Tasmanian Onions	85¢ (1kg)
Large Mainland Celery	\$1.60 bunch
Choice Mainland Strawberries	\$2.80 punnet
Juicy Tangelos	\$1.50 kg

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