

# Research maps blueberry quality after harvest

Brigid Veale, Costa Group

An electronic tongue is one of the tools being used as part of an Honours research project looking at the impact of storage conditions on the quality of blueberries.

Sarah McKay, who is the 2021 recipient of the Costa Honours Scholarship in Agricultural Science worth \$10,000, is investigating post-harvest storage conditions and the influence this has on key quality characteristics of blueberries. Originally from the rural region of Allens Rivulet in southern Tasmania, Sarah is studying a Bachelor of Agricultural Science with Honours in Hobart through University of Tasmania. “My project is around post-harvest storage conditions, mainly temperature, and its influence on key quality characteristics of blueberries over time. The characteristics include colour, aroma and texture, with emphasis on the influence the conditions have on taste profiles,” Sarah said.



**Sarah McKay.** Photo credit: Costa Group

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**These characteristics are tested using an electronic tongue (e-tongue) as well as a number of other instrumental methods and a human taste panel for comparison. The e-tongue is a piece of technology that has not been used extensively on fresh fruit produce, especially blueberries, so this is a major focus for my project.**

Sarah said the results from the instrumental methods and the human taste panel would help map consumer purchasing habits based on quality characteristics. Sarah, who has also worked over the summer holidays in quality control at the Costa Berries blueberry farm at Sulphur Creek, said she was keen to pursue a career in horticulture.

“Working at Costa allowed me to gain knowledge of the processes involved in blueberry production and harvest in the Northwest of Tasmania,” she said.

“The Scholarship has taken a bit of the pressure off and has helped with the costs of living out of home.”

The recipient of the undergraduate Costa Scholarship in Agricultural Science for 2021-2024 is Jack Schouten, who is in the first year of a Bachelor of Agricultural Science with Honours.

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