

# Profile: Kate Bradley, Kates Berry Farm

Mark Salter, Berry Industry Development Officer, Fruit Growers Tasmania

Kate moved to Tasmania from Victoria 37 years ago inspired by the state's beauty and clean environment. Coming from a textile manufacturing background, Kate was looking for a lifestyle change way before it was fashionable to do so.



Soon after her move Kate purchased a piece of land with stunning views overlooking the Freycinet Peninsular on the east coast of Tasmania near Swansea. At first, she tried her hand at growing vegetables both for herself and local restaurants. Quickly realising she probably couldn't make a living from this she began selling raspberries for a local grower and thought growing berries might be an option.

After travelling the state and speaking to berry growers Kate learnt that growing berries at her location might not work, particularly with poor soil and a lack of reliable water. Not wanting to give up on the idea of growing berries entirely, Kate looked at what was happening with tourism in other states and overseas.

Given the beauty of the east coast region of Tasmania she decided to take a punt and plant a small plot of strawberries and some raspberries primarily aiming at the Agritourism market, which at that stage was a very small industry.

She then built a cool room to store her fruit. Being a very innovative person Kate was not content just building any old run-of-the-mill cool room, so she undertook extensive research into the best method of refrigerating berries for longer term storage and soon discovered that storing the fruit at a higher humidity level enabled her to keep fruit fresh for up to three weeks.

The next stage was to build a small café to encourage people to come and spend time (and money) at her farm. With her background in research, Kate put a great deal of thought into how to attract customers. Her first thought was that women actually tend to make most of the purchasing decisions and with that in mind, she set her shop up to make it attractive for women. She also thought berries alone were not enough of a drawcard to attract customers, so she decided to make and sell ice cream. This addition to the offer was a major hit with her customers, and she quickly introduced great coffee and high-quality food increasing the popularity of the business further.

Kate also started producing a line of value-added products including jams, sauces, chocolate, and fruit wine. After many hours of research and taste testing, Kate gradually reduced the sugar levels in her products - particularly the jams - allowing the natural fruit flavours to come through and as a result the products are now a top seller in her shop. Kate has also put a lot of thought into labelling her products choosing to keep the label simple and easy to read.

Kate has always had a love for wine making and has been producing wine for over 30 years. Recently, Kate took the next bold step and built a small-scale modern winery on site and now produces a range of fruit wines, which retail in the shop.



**Kates Berry Farm boasts views across Great Oyster Bay to the world renowned Freycinet National Park.**  
Photo credit: Mark Salter



**The farm now boasts a café, shop and boutique winery.** Photo credit: Mark Salter

**A new dawn.  
A new standard.**

One of her biggest successes is producing wine in a smaller 375ml bottle, a great hit with customers as many prefer to purchase a small bottle rather than consume a standard bottle while travelling.

Kate's business is based around tourism and prior to COVID her customer base was mainly overseas tourists. When COVID hit and international tourists stopped coming the business landscape changed overnight, but fortunately Kate was able to continue trading through that very difficult period by being flexible and not being over committed financially. She has come out the other side with a much broader customer base.

Kate reports that over-regulation in the food industry and staff shortages are the major challenges for her business currently. One of the issues impacting staff availability is the lack of low-cost rental accommodation on the Tasmanian east coast as many long-term rental properties have become Airbnb-style accommodation putting the cost out of reach of many casual staff.

Kate is always keen to try new things but attributes part of her success to an emphasis on good old-fashioned quality as well as listening to her customers and being flexible when necessary. She believes in taking one step at a time and not over capitalising; only expanding as she can afford to do so. Kate travels widely both locally and overseas to research tourism experiences. She is well regarded within the tourism industry in Tasmania and is quite often asked for her advice and is always generous in giving it. Kate is a person always keen to learn new things and has no intention of slowing down anytime soon.

Find out more at [katesberryfarm.com](http://katesberryfarm.com)



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