



ASSOCIATION

Growing Local & Regional Produce Communities

Bees R Us is a husband and wife owned and operated business, based in Braidwood and established in 2005, supplying Beekeeping equipment, Honey and Bees Wax and Honey inspired products.

The amount of Honey and Wax produced varies from year to year depending on the conditions. 2019 - 2020 has been a particularly devastating time for a lot of bees and beekeepers not only in the Southern Harvest Region but almost the entire east coast of Australia. 2019 was a very dry year with many fresh water sources drying up and forcing beekeepers to bring in water for their bees' survival. Then in late November 2019 multiple bush fires started in the region. These eventually converged to create one massive fire covering millions of acres. Braidwood became a cul-de-sac due to road closures and nobody was able to travel East or South of the town.

This was very stressful for Scott and Armonde of Bees R Us as they knew their bees were in areas being impacted by the fires and they were unable to travel to those areas and move them to safety.

It wasn't until February 2020 that the roads were reopened and we were able to get access to the bees. Many of their fears became reality, with some loss of hives and much loss of habitat. Luckily their hives are spread out over a large area and they were able to save most of them. However, they all needed to be moved to new locations as there was nothing left for the bees to forage on.



Flat Out Produce, based in Captains Flat, NSW, is a micro-enterprise that started as a collection of ideas and an unexpected meeting with a local olive grower. An early experiment with infusing garlic into extra virgin olive oil to address issues of food intolerances, led to a collaboration with the local olive grove, 'Aminya'. As well as introducing the local community to a wonderful local organic olive oil, Flat Out Produce has since developed a boutique range of infused extra virgin olive oils using the 'Olimia Estate' oil as the base. All herbs and produce used in the infusions are sourced from local growers or home gardens. Connection with a local community of producers and those who are committed to supporting, allows Kerenza o Flat Out Produce to continue to do what she loves – cooking, creating and sharing with others.

Kerenza's family were very lucky during the horror bushfire season. Captains Flat was threatened numerous times between November and February, with the nearest fire front approximately 20 kms away. They lost count of the number of times they headed into work and school not knowing whether we might get home again. An emergency kit and precious items lived in the car for weeks on end. Captains Flat is surrounded by bushland, a long drive from other towns and at risk of being cut off during fire. Kerenza found the hardest thing was living with constant anxiety about the future, and how that would affect her family. To compound this she also often felt guilt. Guilt because she knew that they were much luckier than so many others who had lost everything.

Staying connected with the local community of Southern Harvest producers and consumers, helped Kerenza a great deal. Simple acts of kindness, whether it was people checking in or customers ordering olive oil infusions and supporting the business, proved that community is the 'glue' that holds us together when the world around us appears to be falling apart. "It is an incredible privilege to be part of it and I am stronger because of it" *Kerenza*.



Pacawoolly is a small alpaca stud in Michelago, NSW, south of Canberra. It is owned and managed by Jo and Gary who live on the property and business partners, Helen and Ann who are involved in all business decisions and who, with Gary and Jo, value add to the yarn through knitting, spinning and weaving. They breed high quality alpacas in a variety of colours (yarns are not dyed), choosing for low micron, high comfort factor fleeces to mill into our yarns. This ensures a soft and comfortable product We use sustainable, natural and economically viable products and processes in the care of alpacas, the land and fleeces. We sell fleeces, yarn and a variety of hand made items.

This part of NSW has been experiencing drought for quite some time. Without feed on the ground, all feed had to be bought in and over the last year or so prices for feed have almost doubled.

This led to financial strain for many farmers, including Pacawoolly. With this background of drought and dry, dusty paddocks came the bushfires of 2019 -2020. At one stage the Pacawoolly property had major fires to the west and south. Three times they prepared to defend the property and the animals and three times the wind changed and they were safe. The stress of those months was prolonged, intense and debilitating. To add to the stress, they lost all of our 130,000 litres of stored rainwater in late January due to a collapsed pipe. Fortunately, they had a small amount stored in another tank and then could buy in water once the pipe was fixed.

The cooler months have brought respite some respite with rain and a little feed on the ground for the 64 alpacas to graze on, however Pacawoolly are still buying in a majority of their feeding needs from Victoria.

Braidwood Food Co. is a family run, locavore business founded by chef Tim Wimborne and his wife Meraiah Foley. Working with a range of local organic market gardeners and small-scale specialist farms, they hand-craft limited run, artisanal food right in the heart of Braidwood, a heritage listed town just 60-minutes from Canberra. Their 100% Australian ingredient fresh and shelf-stable products exclusively showcase seasonal flavours of the Braidwood district.

The Wimborne family's own farm, a short distance east of Braidwood, is the state's first commercial native Australian Mountain Pepper berry orchard. It employs only sustainable techniques and a nature-first farming practice.

The devastating 2019 -2020 Currowan bushfire destroyed their farm and led Tim and Meraiah to pivot more heavily towards food production. Since the devastating summer and with the Covid-19 pandemic in full swing, Tim and Meraiah have purchased a commercial building in Braidwood, retooled their food production equipment, increased their product range and capacity and seen their business grow as consumers alter eating habits.

They have also begun replanting their native pepper berry orchard.



**BRAIDWOOD
FOOD COMPANY**

Prana Produce, the farm and business of John and Christina and children Kailash and Maya, is situated on a 20 acre property at Monga NSW. "Something full of Prana brings vitality, 'aliveness,' energy – it feels good. By eating, drinking, washing, nourishing and being around things that are beaming with Prana, we increase that energy within. Everybody wants to feel good. Our intention is to produce food, products and practices that help people feel good." John and Christina have a passion for yoga, real food, natural skincare and ethical home products.

During the 2019 -2020 fires many of the properties adjoining Prana were burnt. They were very fortunate that the fires didn't directly ignite their property however, every day their fate was in the hands of the wind. Some days the smoke so thick their eyes stung. Black leaves fell from the sky and they could determine how close the flames were by feeling the debris heat. Hope motivated them to continue. To weed, to seed, to harvest in the worst conditions, while also preparing for the fires, putting out spot fires or sleeping with one eye open. Across the road, just metres from them the Monga forest burned. Fire fighters were moving in and around the property in preparation to save their home. They mentally prepared to lose their greenhouses, the garden and all the tools.

They breathed a sigh of relief when the rains began to fall. After 3 evacuations and living in a state of anxiety they were calmed and joyous. The rain put out all the fires, however it created another little hurdle, 600mls of water in less than a week. This rain, although welcome, damaged crops and led to mould that significantly impacted the summer vegetables. However, John and Christina choose to live by biodynamic principles and cyclically syntropy - through order arises chaos, through chaos arises order. Amidst the crazy weather, the highs and lows, ups and downs, good and bad there is an underlying harmony.

SOUTHERN HARVEST ASSOCIATION

www.southernharvest.org.au



Bent Shed Produce grow, source, process, and blend Australian native edible plants into herb and spice mixes, teaching people that Australia's native foods have a primary place in the kitchen. It's a precarious and burgeoning industry, with much more demand than there are growers. On 9 December 2019, the fires went through Mongarlowe. It's a locality about 30mins north of Braidwood, with tall rainforest trees and deep pockets of fertile granite soil. In those pockets are plantations of the native Australian Mountain Pepper shrub. The fires razed those plantations to the ground. Mountain pepper is a cool-climate rainforest plant, indigenous to parts of NSW and Tasmania. It has beautiful red stems with deep green pepper-flavoured leaves, producing rich purple berries that dry to an intense fruity peppery heat. It's not meant to burn. Rainforest doesn't burn.

On New Year's Eve, fires approached Mystery Bay. A plantation of coastal native edibles - Lemon Myrtle, Aniseed Myrtle, Davidson's Plum, Lemon Aspen, Macadamia nut, Bunya Bunya pine - was one wind change away from destruction. They, too, are not designed to burn. Night after night, from 21 November 2019 to 23 January 2020, from the Bent Shed veranda at Lower Boro they watched those fires glowing over the mountains to the east. For weeks, the roads were closed, the tourists disappeared, and the people and animals choked on the smoke. Long before COVID19, everyone was wearing P2 masks at the farmer's market.

The loss of even one native food supplier, particularly local ones, hits the entire industry hard, because they all know each other. They're friends and family, not just faceless growers and packers and packagers. Luckily, Bent Shed didn't burn during the 2019 – 2020 fires, and they are still able to support growers and suppliers, keeping that thread of interest alive while the growers replant and regroup and recover.

