

SE **Business**
HD **Rhu Bru team is keeping the beet in Apple Isle**

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HOLGER Ostersen and Jan Hughes have proved that one man's trash is another man's treasure.

The husband-and-wife team use second-grade rhubarb, not fit for supermarket shelves, to create the Rhu Bru range of juices, compotes, jam, vinegars, cordial and relish. They **sold** their first bottle of rhubarb juice in September 2008, after almost a year of experimenting with flavours.

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Now the couple produce about 100,000 pouches of rhubarb compote and 40,000 juice bottles a year from the Razz Rhubarb processing factory in Scottsdale, Tasmania.

"If people had told us then that we would have a rhubarb processing plant I would have said they were crazy — I'm a schoolteacher and Holger is a farmer," Ms Hughes said.

"But the opportunity was there so you grab it and run with it." The couple **buy** rhubarb from Ms Hughes' cousin, Jerrod Nichols, and lavender, carrot, apple and berries for mixed-flavour products from other Tasmanian producers.

"We use only Tasmanian fruit because this is a Tasmanian product — if we support each other we are stronger for it," Ms Hughes said.

"It is too easy to import cheap products from **China** but we prefer not to do that." Mr Ostersen and Ms Hughes, who also run a bed and breakfast in Scottsdale, launched Beat Rhut beetroot juices in April.

"Beetroot is having a renaissance in terms of being popular for its health benefits," Ms Hughes said. "People are choosing these sorts of still drinks as opposed to fizzy drinks more and more." Rhu Bru compote is **sold** at Woolworths in Tasmania, while the full range is sent across the state through distributors. Leo's Fine Food and **Wine** stocks the range at its Melbourne stores.

The couple employ up to eight casual staff on productions days, and three to four for packaging.

Ms Hughes said Rhu Bru would take on more staff, rather than increase machinery, to expand. "We find value in employing people," Ms Hughes said.

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