

INTERNET FOOD SHOPPING

By Rosemary Ann Ogilvie

When we moved to Launceston from Brisbane early in 2001, I found myself in the position of a) not knowing the local-supplier secrets and b) having to produce three meals for two every day, as we were both working from home. While I love cooking, there was the distinct possibility all this kitchen time would send me right over the edge! So I approached it as a new culinary adventure: I've bought scores of new cookbooks – mainly vegetarian - from the extraordinary range carried by Amazon.com and Barnes and Noble. This in turn meant I had to source a number of new ingredients, many of which were unavailable in Launceston. So I started searching the Internet for hard-to-find items, and in the process discovered some amazing suppliers – and some brilliant prices, as in many instances the producer supplies the end user directly.

I've purchased products for my own use from every supplier listed in this directory. All have delivered in terms of quality and reliability, so I'm confident about recommending them. Certainly, some may be a little slow in despatching their parcels, but others have customer-service orientation that leaves most bricks-and-mortar retailers for dead.

So here you go: it doesn't matter where you live, or how busy you are, e-commerce puts everything right at your fingertips.

ALCOHOL

Vintage Cellars

www.vintagecellars.com.au

This online liquor retailer sells liqueurs, beers, spirits, whiskies, bourbons, aperitifs and premixes as well as a comprehensive range of Australian and imported white, red, dessert, sparkling, fortified, and old and rare wines.

Cellarmasters

www.cellarmasters.com.au

Be warned! The email specials Cellarmasters send their customers are so tempting that sometimes you may have to hit the delete key without even looking at it so you don't totally blow your budget. They offer Australian white, red or mixed dozens, value sixteens, and bin ends from serious top-quality connoisseur and special occasion wines, right down the line to fun casual quaffing varieties.

Get Wines Direct

www.getwinesdirect.com.au

Sensational Australian wine bargains can be found at this site, which offers both labelled wines and cleanskins at incredible prices, singly or by the carton. There's a huge range of reds, whites and bubbly from which to choose, and free delivery anywhere in Australia brings to price down even more.

The Lark Distillery

www.larkdistillery.com.au

This Hobart-based brewery, which commenced business in 1992, has the distinction of being the state's first licensed distillery since the previous distillery closed down in 1839. The owners immediately set about producing a premium single malt whisky, capitalising on Tasmania's clean water, Franklin barley and ideal climate. Once the whisky was consigned to the oak barrels for the long maturation process, they started investigating other products, and have created a range of unique spirits and liqueurs from Tasmanian produce. These include the Tasmanian Bush Liqueur with its distinctive pepperberry bite; Tasmanian Apple Schnapps and Apple Liqueur made from Huon Valley apples; and Cherry Max Liqueur made from Tassie's legendary southern cherries. Pepperberrys also features in Pepperberry Vodka and Pepperberry Gin. And of course there's that double-distilled single-malt whisky, available in 150ml and 500ml containers, as are all the spirits.

AMERICAN FOOD

USA Foods

www.usafoods.com.au

No matter how much of a food purist you are, when you spend time in the USA you inevitably develop an addiction for some of their packaged food, be it breakfast cereal; candy bars; sodas; pancake mixes; Oreos; or whatever. This Bentleigh, Victoria business imports them all, plus a lot more. For those of a more serious culinary leaning, there's a great range of chilli products, including chipotle tabasco. They also sell liquid smoke in hickory and mesquite flavours, an ingredient I've found difficult to source elsewhere.

BEVERAGES

Eumun-Tea

www.ozevillage.com.au/tea/store/

If your tea experience thus far has been restricted to supermarket teabags, entering this Eumundi-based online store will expand your world beyond anything you can imagine. Even I – a confirmed coffee addict – am totally seduced by the range of superior-quality plain and flavoured teas. Categories include Indian; Sri Lankan; Nepalese; Green; Oriental; Herbal; Fruit; and 'Ginga Yandina' (ginger from nearby Yandina). Within these categories you'll find first-flush Darjeeling; Moroccan Gunpowder Mint; flavoured black teas such as the sublime blood orange; creamy strawberry; forest berry; perfect peach; and almond chocolate. In the flavoured green teas there's Geisha Cherry Blossom; Geisha Mango Glory; and Green Earl Grey Jasmine.

You'll never use tea bags again.

The Coffee Works

www.ozevillage.com.au/coffee/store/

I first encountered this Mareeba-based company in the early nineties at the Saturday-morning Rusty's Markets in Cairns. My trips to North Queensland are rare these days, but at least I can buy this coffee online. I particularly enjoy their flavoured coffees: Swiss Chocolate; Chocolate Macadamia; Macadamia; Hazelnut; and Irish Cream, but purists will be happy to know they also carry an excellent 'straight' range of Australian and International blends.

The Perfect Cup

www.perfectcup.com.au

Another excellent coffee supplier, discovered this time at the atmospheric Adelaide Central Markets. The Perfect Cup carries an extensive range of coffees from the world's great coffee-growing locations: Kenya; Columbia; Brazil; Ethiopia; Guatemala; Costa Rica; India; Jamaica; Papua New Guinea; Zimbabwe; – and Australia. There's a good range of decaffeinated and flavoured coffees – including some lovely flavoured decafs; there's a herbal coffee; an organic bean from Australia; and the coffee substitutes chicory and roasted barley. Swiss chocolate and Dutch cocoa powder is also available, as well as an extensive selection of black, green, herbal and flavoured teas, and an organic Ceylon tea.

Granma's 1908 Cordial

www.granmas1908cordials.com.au

In Young, NSW, Helen Thomas makes a range of more than 20 delicious natural, colour- and preservative-free cordials. There's the now-ubiquitous (courtesy Jamie Oliver) elderflower – and an excellent version at that, as well as ginger beer (brilliant with sparkling mineral water); wild citrus; raspberry; quandong; cherry; chilli; peppermint; pineapple-orange; wattleseed; lime; lemon aspen and ginger; rosella; lemongrass; honey-eucalyptus; sarsaparilla; and strawberry-forestberry. Additionally, there's a smaller range of sauces such as cherry & chilli; chilli & tomato; basil & tomato; and a sweet raspberry and plum topping. All are sold in 750ml bottles, and several are also available in 250ml bottles.

CoffeeSnobs

www.coffeesnobs.com.au

Have you ever considered buying green beans and roasting your own? It's incredibly easy – all you need is an electric popcorn popper – and if you love your coffee, you'll save a fortune, especially if you buy your green beans from this cooperative. CoffeeSnobs offers various options for purchasing the beans. One of these is as a regular monthly despatch of three diverse bean varieties, each slightly less than one kilogram, for a total of \$30 – which includes postage.

Another is through the monthly polls put up on the Website. Members (registration is free) vote for the coffees they want from the selection up for grabs. The minimum order is 2.5 kilograms, the maximum 15 kilograms. Organic, Fairtrade and high-quality decaffeinated coffees appear regularly in the selections, with are drawn from various coffee-growing regions. The majority of these coffees – including the organic coffees – fall in the \$7 to \$10 per kilogram range, but you can expect to pay considerably more for some of the rare, premium coffees offered occasionally. The selections generally include tasting notes, and advice about the degree of roasting the beans require. There's plenty of information about roasting techniques on the Website. If you think you are going to get serious about coffee roasting, consider buying the book *Home Coffee Roasting: Romance and Revival* by Kenneth Davids, which is available from www.amazon.com.

BOOKS

Powell's Books

www.powellsbooks.com

Have you ever searched through a cookbook category on one of the major online booksellers only to find that the most intriguing titles are out of print? Well, chances are you'll find them at Powell's Books: as an example, I recently scored the wonderful *Cooler Than Chillies* and Nadine Abensur's sublime *Secrets From A Vegetarian Kitchen* (which I had to have for her recipe for Belgian endive with blueberries and dolcelatte). Although the twenty books I've bought from Powell's so far are all

second hand, most appear to have never been opened, and none have seen serious kitchen service. They sell new books as well as second hand.

Powell's customer service ranks with Amazon's. If you request your order to be shipped by the slightly more expensive WorldMail, the books will arrive in just three or four weeks. A word of warning, though: second-hand does not always equate with cheap. Depending on demand, some of the books sell at full retail price or more.

BUSH TUCKER

Kurrajong Australian Native Foods

www.bushtuckershop.com/shop/

A comprehensive range of gourmet Australian native foods – fruits, nuts, herbs and spices – is stocked by this store located in the foothills of the Blue Mountains. There are native fruit jams like Desert Quandong and Rainforest Plum; Fingerlime Marmalade; gourmet sauces and chutneys such as Rainforest Plum Sweet Chilli Sauce; Bush Tomato Relish and Desert Quandong Spicy Chutney; mustards flavoured with forestberry and mountain pepper; native spice mixes and native herbal teas like Aniseed Myrtle and Native Mint.

CHEESE

Coolabine Farmstead Goats Cheeses

www.coolabinefarmstead.com

Located, in Queensland's Sunshine Coast hinterland, this small operation is producing some extraordinary goat's milk cheeses, and was named champion cheese maker at the 2003 Sydney Royal Easter Show. In addition to lovely classic and marinated fetta cheeses, they make several traditional French cheeses, including the soft ripened Caprice; the soft-curd unripened Fashka; the soft ripened Clashair, rolled in wattle ash; and Shalazade, a Caprice marinated in lemon thyme and rosemary to produce a robust, full-bodied flavour.

Happily, these beautiful cheeses can be purchased by mail order, although at the time of writing credit card facilities were not available.

Grandveve Cheeses

www.grandview.au.com

At last, sheep's milk cheeses are being produced in Tasmania – and they are just simply superb, as are the cow's milk cheeses also produced by this organic dairy located at Kettering, just south of Hobart.

Sheep cheeses include pecorino; the Roquefort-style Blue by Ewe; the fresh Sheeppurb and the lactic acid curd Friesland Fresh; a haloumi cheese that happens to be one of the best haloumi's I've ever tasted; and the manchego-style Primavera. The cow's milk range embraces a classic vintage cheddar; The Kiss, which as a creamy Harvarti layered with crushed and dried organic grapevine leaves; a creamy camembert-style washed rind; Azzuro, which is a lighter-style blue cheese; a manchego; the Welsh-style Caerphilly; the Roquefort-style blue-vein Blue Moo; and Al Bert, a camembert cheese.

A selection of wines from the attached vineyard is also available online, along with a gourmet range including wild pear chutney, quince paste, and verjuice.

Red Hill Cheese

www.redhillcheese.com.au

Victorian-based Red Hill Cheese developed their farmhouse goat's milk and cow's milk cheeses to complement local wines. My favourite is the semi-hard Portsea Picnic goat's cheese, but they're all beautiful. There are traditional soft, creamy cheeses such as Misty Valley and Merrick's Mist; the soft to semi-hard washed-rind Bushranger Gold and Gunnamatta Gold; a soft goat's cheese in a Thai-inspired marinade; and Sensation, a beautiful farmhouse-style goat cheese that can be enjoyed at any stage: from fresh at three-to-five days; to creamy at 14 days, to semi-matured at three-to-four weeks, to aged at two-to-three months. The creamy, seasonal, herbed Arthur's Peak pyramid is a taste explosion on the palate.

Ashgrove Farm Cheese Tasmania

www.ashgrovecheese.com.au

English county cheeses are hand made from milk produced by the owners' dairy herds. Cheesemaker Jane Bennett – never afraid to experiment with flavours – has created an extraordinary range of innovative cheddars including Smoked Lancashire (the best smoked cheese I've ever tasted); Bush Pepper, which makes a great substitute for pecorino pepato; the stunning Wild Wasabi, perfectly flavoured so that it has bite, but doesn't dissolve your sinuses; and a stunning marinated feta. The Exotic range includes a beautiful cumin seed, a red chilli, and a lavender. Some of the traditional English varieties are Lancashire, Wensleydale, Cheshire, Double Gloucester, a smoked cheddar, a very acceptable low-fat cheddar and the flavoursome black-label vintage cheddar.

The Cheese Club, Richmond Hill Café and Larder (RHCL)

www.rhcl.com.au/theclub.html

Cheese aficionados unable to visit the famous cheese room attached to Stephanie Alexander's RHCL can still experience some of the world's finest cheeses by joining their cheese club. An annual membership fee of \$38.50 entitles you to order a new offering of mixed cheese (you pay for each order) every seven weeks.

CheeseLinks

www.cheeselinks.com.au

If you've been tempted to make your own cheeses (it's not hard, but it does require some focussed time), this is the where you can source all your needs: starter and ripening cultures; rennet; lipase; baskets and moulds; cheese wax and plastic coating; cheesecloth; plastic matting for draining whey; and accessories such as dairy thermometers, calcium chloride and pH test papers. Also available is the excellent book *Home Cheesemaking* written by the owners, Neil and Carole Willman. It includes instructions for just about every cheese you can imagine. The Willmans conduct cheesemaking classes around the country, often through TAFE adult-education programs: they're lots of fun, so go along if you get the opportunity.

CHOCOLATE

Definitely Chocolate

<http://www.definitelychocolate.com.au>

Luxury gourmet, preservative-free chocolates, hand made from imported Belgian chocolate, featuring delicious fillings such as coffee cognac, hazelnut praline and pistachio nougat. For the connoisseur, there are blocks of single-source chocolates that allow you to savour the taste and aroma specific to plantations of Java, Ecuador, Cuba, Venezuela and Tanzania. There's also a selection of award-winning organic chocolates.

Vanderwee Belgian Chocolates

www.vanderwee.com.au

This Sydney-based retailer/e-tailer airfreights chocolates directly from master chocolatiers in Bruges, Belgium. There are more than 100 different fillings – availability varies with each shipment – including passionfruit, raspberry, pistachio cream, caramel, mocha, lemon, coconut, raspberry, Cointreau and Grand Marnier. Belgian Florentine biscuits are also available.

HARDWARE

Executive Chef:

www.executivechef.com.au

This Brisbane-based e-tailer and retailer is a died-and-gone-to-heaven site that stocks everything related to food preparation at great prices: bakeware and cookware (check out their amazing range of flan and quiche tins); knives and accessories; tools and utensils; books and tableware. They also carry a select range of ingredients including olive, nut, seed, truffle and infused oils; gold and silver leaf; alcohol-based flavourings; natural flavourings such as fruit, nut and vanilla pastes and fruit waters; chocolate and cocoa, including the divine Callebaut cacao powder (supermarket brands just won't cut it once you use Callebaut); vinegars and verjuice; sweet and savoury sauces; herbs and spices.

Peters of Kensington

www.petersofkensington.com.au

A long-established Sydney-based retailer, Peters of Kensington boasts the most comprehensive selection of homewares, dinnerware, and cutlery (to name just three of 10 departments) in Australia. The range within each section is extensive: there are 27 brands within the cookware section alone, including all the favourites like Scanpan, Le Creuset, Le Chasseur, Circulon (which I love as it seems to cope better with heavy use than some other non-stick pans). In addition to permanently great prices on all lines, they offer weekly specials: when I wrote this, the Circulon 28cm open French skillet was \$52, against the RRP of \$120, while the Scanpan 28cm wok was selling for \$79, compared to the RRP of \$219. And best of all, freight charges don't cancel out these amazing savings!

Centre.Net.Au

www.centre.net.au

This family-owned, Internet-only business sells a huge range of electronic and general items. I'm listing them here because their homewares selection includes the Fowlers Vacola range of preserving equipment, which includes the brilliant little food dehydrator that I bought to deal with my abundant but late harvest of tomatoes – the sun simply strong enough to dry them.

Togar Ovens

www.togarovens.com

Ever thought about smoking your own fish, poultry, meat, cheese, vegetables, or tofu? I was alerted to the possibilities of home-smoked food through in Eric Tucker's vegetarian recipe books. The flavours are truly sensational, and the process is surprisingly quick and easy.

A dairy farmer from Beenleigh makes a great portable food-smoking unit (a replica of the one his father used in South Africa) in heavy-gauge, maintenance-free stainless steel. Cost including postage is around \$155.

HERBS AND SPICES

Fireworks Foods

www.fireworksfoods.com.au

As the name suggests, this is the place to buy anything fiery, from chillies (every variety of dried and tinned chilli you could ever need) to mustards to wasabi, from seeds for planting to hot, hot chocolate (we're talking taste, not temperature). Here you'll find all those elusive Mexican ingredients mentioned in North American cookbooks, including yellow and white corn masa flour for making tortillas. There's Mexican chocolate with cinnamon; several types of mole; Peruvian aji amarillo chilli paste; tinned tomatillos; a huge range of Australian chilli products including the correctly named BHM (Bloody Hot Mate) brand; an even larger selection of imported chilli sauces; several scalp-peeling mustards and the particularly good Wasabi Ginger Sauce from the Blair's Heat range.

Manny's House of Spices

www.mannyspices.com.au

Established in 1986, this Sydney-based family business retails a vast range of Sri Lankan and Indian products, and also operates a commercial spice grinding, blending and mixing sector that caters to the wholesale industry.

This is the place to buy heavily used spices such as black peppercorns, cumin seeds, cinnamon; coriander seeds, mustard seeds, sesame seeds, white poppy seeds (just a sampling from a magnificent range) very inexpensively in bulk. There's an extensive selection of curry powders, pastes and masalas. Nuts, lentils, flour, rice, tea, pickles (the Fern's Lime Chilli Pickle is unparalleled, as is Manny's Mango Pickle), paneer, wholemeal chappatis and barfi are also carried, along with a small range of Ayurvedic herbal and beauty products.

Herbie's Spices

www.herbies.com.au

No one would dispute this business's claim that they stock the largest range of spices in the southern hemisphere: if you encounter a spice you've never heard of in a recipe, you're sure to find it at Herbie's. The range of premium-quality whole and ground spices spans traditional and esoteric Indian spices; curry blends from across Asia; North African blends; Australian native spices; Cajun; Greek; Laksa; Jamaican Jerk and Herbs de Provence; numerous chilli varieties, Mexican chocolate; black, green, pink and white peppercorns; dried limes; and so on. All spices are neatly packaged in resealable plastic zipper bags that can be used for permanent spice storage.

Charmaine's Kitchen

www.charmainesolomon.com

Charmaine Solomon reshaped Australians' eating habits with her wonderful cookbooks – I still have on my bookshelves an ancient, battered copy of her seminal *Complete Asian Cookbook*, although these days I'm more likely to reach for her more recent *Complete Vegetarian Cookbook*.

Ms Solomon's 24 books – including the delightful *Love and a Wooden Spoon* – are available on this e-commerce site. So are husband Reuben's sensational spice pastes and marinades, which make such a difference when cooking Charmaine's recipes. Included in the range are Singapore Chilli Crab Mix; Kashmiri Marinade; Thai Green Curry Paste; Vegetarian Laksa Paste; Roasted Chilli Jam; and Sri Lanka Curry Paste.

HONEY

The Honey Farm

www.thehoneyfarm.com.au

In the pretty wooden shop in the hamlet of Chudleigh, near Deloraine in Tasmania, you can taste some 50 varieties of honey including the legendary leatherwood, a Tasmanian Manuka, and a range of naturally flavoured and infused varieties, including caramel, walnut, pistachio, cinnamon, blackberry, lime, lemon, orange, to name just a few. No one walks out of the store empty handed!

There's an addictive selection of savoury honeys, too. The Honey and Spice range includes the delicious pepperberry (divine on savoury muffins), lemon myrtle, Cajun, and red chilli: any of these give a fantastic edge to caramelised onions – much more interesting than sugar. Belonging to the Spiced Honey range are Marrakesh Magic, Kashmiri Crush, Caribbean Chilli; Outback Blend, and Seven Seas.

GENERAL

Simon Johnson Online Store

www.simonjohnson.com.au

The Simon Johnson name is legendary among foodies, and this wonderful online store allows foodlovers everywhere to purchase his extraordinary high-end range of gourmet delights. When I logged on in late March to check out new products, I was thrilled to find they now carry the rare Carmargue red rice from France, something I thought I'd never find in Australia. I was also able to buy chestnut flour, 00 flour for pasta making, buckwheat polenta, and French-style green lentils. I could have purchased fresh truffles flown in from France (last of the season), tinned truffles, all sorts of fresh cheeses from around the world, pancetta, prosciutto, more varieties of butter than I knew existed, artisan pastas, infused oils, and hundreds of other items.

Although the following company currently does not have an e-commerce site, it does offer mail order.

Buderim Ginger

www.buderimginger.com

(Click the Consumer Products button for a list of products, and Sales Enquiries to request a price list).

With 60 years experience growing ginger, it's not surprising that Buderim ginger is regarded as the world's finest. There's candied, glaze and ground ginger; the Original Ginger Marmalade (the only one to use in Nigella Lawson's grandmother's Ginger-Jam Bread and Butter Pudding); a range of other jams including a sugar-free spread and the Champagne Sensation Conserve; delicious young pickled ginger; sweet ginger sauce; Ginger Refresher Mixer cordial; and fat-free Ginger Bears confectionery.

NUTS

The (Macadamia) Nut Farm

www.thenutfarm.com.au

John and Lesley Groves distribute macadamia products from their Gympie plantation throughout Australia and around the world. Enjoying the direct contact with their customers, they decided early in the piece to avoid middlemen, and are sharply focussed on excellent customer service.

Raw and dry-roasted macadamia nuts in various grades can be purchased in 500 gram gift packs or bulk 10 kilogram packs. Cold-pressed macadamia oil – one of the best of the good oils, and beautiful in sweet muffins and salads - is available in two-litre and 500 ml containers. There's a divine rich, dark, unprocessed macadamia honey in 500 gram squeeze jar and a 2.5 litre container; this honey features in their addictive honey-roasted macadamia nuts. A match made in heaven is macadamia honey and pure macadamia nut paste. Macadamia candy bars and cosmetics are also available.

Stahmann (Pecan) Farms

www.stahmannfarms.com.au

Stahmann Farms is the largest pecan producer in the southern hemisphere. The pecans are grown - without the use of pesticides - in Roma and processed in Toowoomba. In addition to plain and flavoured pecan halves - maple and coffee are two of several flavours on offer - there are pecan cakes and puddings; pecan fudge and pecan chocolate; candies such as pecan brittle; pecan and hazelnut liqueur; and pecan-oil skin creams. The nuts are available in two-kilogram bulk packs, which represent very good value, and there's a brilliant range of gift packages.

The Peanut Van

www.peanutvan.com.au

If you've passed through Kingaroy – Australia's peanut capital - in the past 30-odd years, chances are you've stopped at the renowned Peanut Van to sample a bag or two of the local produce. Once you've tasted Rob and Chris Patch's range – they're peanut farmers - you're spoiled for life. Nothing compares, and there's a reason: the Patches carry only the jumbo-sized peanuts that account for just 27 per cent of every crop.

Now you no longer have to make the trek to Kingaroy to enjoy them as the entire Peanut Van range is sold online, from raw or roasted peanuts in the shell, through roasted, shelled kernels, to a range of flavoured peanuts such as chilli and hickory smoke. Their peanut butter – available in smooth and crunchy - is superb, made from 100 per cent Kingaroy peanuts with not a preservative in sight. There's also a yummy peanut brittle.

Wellwood Walnuts

www.wellwood.com.au

From a plantation in Wallace, near Ballarat, comes fresh, cold-pressed, omega-3-rich walnut oil, which carries the true 'essence of walnuts' flavour. Probably a little more expensive than the French walnut oil found in health food stores, but there is just no comparison in taste. Best value is the 500 ml flip-top twin pack.

Fresh walnuts are available in season.

OLIVES

Island Olive Grove Tasmania

www.islandolivegrove.com

Fat, flavoursome Kalamata, green and black olives, grown on an estate in the Coal River Valley in southern Tasmania, are sold in 150 gram, 250 gram and 500 gram jars and vacuum-sealed packs in two varieties: marinated, and hot and spicy. A superb extra-virgin olive oil is also available, along with an excellent verjuice, three olive pestos, and a selection of very tasty marinated fetta cheese.

ORGANICS AND WHOLE GRAINS

Putting It Right

www.puttingitright.com.au

Melbourne-based Putting It Right sells a huge range of organic foods, as well as herbs, vitamin supplements, homoeopathic remedies, aromatherapy products, flower essences, environmentally friendly cleaners, and non-toxic personal-care products.

The organic food range covers baby food, beverages, flours, cereals, grains, rice, fruit, nuts, seeds, legumes, oils, pastas, vinegars, snacks, spreads and so on. If, in the interests of good health, you're making a point of eating more unprocessed foods, this is the place to source wholegrain and spelt pastas and flours – every imaginable variety is stocked, including the beautiful L'Abruzze pastas from South Australia. There's a good selection of brown rice, including an Italian Arborio, which takes just 20 minutes to cook.

Casalare Specialty Pasta Pty Ltd

www.casalare.com.au

This long-established (1988) manufacturer of certified organic and wheat-free, gluten-free pasta offers a superb range of healthy and flavoursome pastas. The Bush Pasta range includes varieties such as Bush Pepper Spirals and Lemon Myrtle Spirals; Roasted Wattleseed Tubes and River Mint Gnocchi. The wheat-free, gluten-free range includes rice noodles, spirals, macaroni and shells; the Classic range and Flavoured range made from rice flour and potato flour, with flavourings including tomato and basil and garlic and parsley; the Wholegrain Stoneground/Durum pastas include macaroni, spirals, rigatoni and shells; while in Ancient Grains, you can find spelt gnocchi, pagoda and spaghetti.

Australian Wild Rice

www.ricewild.com

Wild rice is not a rice *per se*, but an annual aquatic grass native to the shallow lakes and streams of North America. Since 1992 wild rice has been grown - without the use of pesticides - and processed by Australian Specialty Rices at Deniliquin, the first wild rice producer in the world not owned by North Americans.

Purchasing the product direct from the grower allows you to try all those recipes you've been hoarding - without wrecking the budget: it's available (post free) in 500 gram packs, and also in a five kilogram bag, which reduces the per-kilo price to around half. Tip: because wild rice takes up to 40 minutes to cook, precook a quantity and freeze in one-cup portions so you can use it when inspiration strikes.

SAUCES/CHUTNEYS/JAMS

Tasmanian Gourmet Sauce Company

www.gourmetsauce.com.au

Julie Barbour creates her exciting range of innovative, flavoursome - and award-winning - products from the Tasmania's abundance of fresh produce. There are berry-based dessert sauces; savoury sauces such as Strawberry Chilli; mustards such as Pepperberry, and Hot Chilli; jams and preserves including the gorgeous Blueberry and Port; chutneys and relishes such as Plum and Pepperberry (heavenly with zucchini and feta fritters) and Tomato Kasoundi. Assorted gift packs solve gourmet giving problems.

Maggie Beer, A Barossa Food Tradition

www.maggiebeer.com.au

It doesn't matter if you can't visit Maggie Beer's famous farm shop in the Barossa Valley, because most of her products are available online: her five cookbooks, all signed; a range of fruit pastes including her famous quince, as well as blood plum, cabernet, fig and a beautiful bitter Seville orange; jams such as Seville orange and burned fig (in memory of her mother); sauces; verjuice; red wine vinegar; dried Kalamata olives; preserved lemons; and wines from the two family vineyards, Pheasant Farm and Beer Bros.

SEEDS

New Gippsland Seeds

www.newgipps.com.au

This 80-year old family company, now run by Peter and Sue de Vaus, is the place to source seeds for the more unusual vegetables and herbs not produced by mainstream companies. Through the years, it has established a solid reputation for innovation and reliability. The massive range includes herbs, both culinary and medicinal; Asian vegetables; sprouting seeds; exotic-fruit seeds; and edible fruiting plants. The vegetable section is pure delight for those wanting to expand their repertoire: Florence fennel; celeriac; broccoli rape; Sicilian purple cauliflower; witlof (Belgian endive); collards, baby corn; red-skinned okra; salsify; scorzonera (black salsify); and tomatillos. Within the range of standards like spinach, carrots, eggplant, tomatoes, radish, beans, peas, pumpkin and so on, you'll find more varieties than you ever imagined existed. Many seeds are either organic or untreated – and the strike rate is brilliant!

SEED SPROUTER

Connoisseurs Australia Pty Ltd

www.connoisseurs.com.au/sprouter.html

The electric Freshlife FL-2000 Automatic Sprouter (approximately \$200) is regarded as one of the best indoor seed- or wheatgrass-sprouting units in the world. The unit makes growing sprouts effortless, producing a perfect crop every time thanks to the automatic sprinkling system that periodically rinses the seeds. Within a few days, you have a huge crop of crisp, absolutely fresh, highly nutritious sprouts ready to eat. You can grow several different types of sprouts at once in the Freshlife FL-2000, which is inexpensive to operate and capable of producing crops in a wide temperature range. All you have to do is change the water in the tank occasionally.

SKIN FOOD

Beauty and the Bees

www.beebeauty.com

It's as important to feed the skin with nutrient-rich food as it is to feed the body. Since the early 1990s, founder Jill Saunders has been making in her Hobart factory 100 per cent chemical-free and preservative-free skin care products that are so pure they need to be stored with the same care as perishable food. After all, that's what these products are made from: leatherwood honey and beeswax; biodynamic dairy cream; organic herbs; cold-pressed vegetable and nut oils; nut meals; and fresh fruit – ingredients that don't clog the pores, leaving your skin free to breathe. The amazing range of soaps includes odour-neutralising Coffee Cooks' Soap, which smells just like the freshly roasted coffee it contains.

FURTHER INFORMATION

SAFE SHOPPING ON THE INTERNET

Here are the keys for safe Internet shopping:

1. Secure your computer with firewall software (to keep hackers out) and automatically updated anti-virus software.
2. Ask your credit-card company about their conditions regarding e-commerce. Some credit card providers offer purchase guarantees, so you may decide to use a card with such a guarantee if this increases your comfort level. However, be aware that not all e-tailers take American Express and Diner's Club cards.
3. Conduct e-commerce only on secure servers: e-tailers usually make this aspect clear, but always confirm by looking for the padlock icon (generally on the bottom of the screen) and checking that the Web address has changed from **http:** to **https:**.
4. Fax or phone your credit-card details to companies with non-secure sites: never send this information via e-mail.
5. If you have any reservations at all about the company, purchase only a small quantity, and pay by bank cheque rather than sharing your credit card details.

POSTAGE

In some instances, you'll find that postage varies considerably according to weight and distance. When this is the case, plan your purchases to get the most out of the postage charge. So if, for example, the rate for a parcel weighing between one and three kilograms is \$15, aim to buy three kilograms of product so you're not buying one kilogram now, another kilogram a few weeks later, and another kilogram a couple of months after that, shelling out \$15 each time.