



Cakes from the rainforest

Queensland's Galeru is the only company in Australia producing and selling a range of confectionery using rainforest fruits. Paul Mitchell reports.



Martha Shepard from Galeru

It's often hard to stand out at a trade show – so many producers with so many eye-catching banners, products and, sometimes, gimmicks. But in the end one company often catches your eye above all the others. At the recent Enterprising Women trade show in Brisbane, that company was confectioner, Galeru.

Standing in front of Galeru's elegant logo (designed in-house), company co-owner Martha Shepherd, wearing a colour-coded shirt and apron, looked the picture of pleasant professionalism. Accompanied by tall jars of deep red and purple berries and a yoghurt dispenser, Galeru's stand drew a constant flow of people to sample Shepherd's produce.

But it's not surprising that Galeru is a company that has hit the ground running. US-born co-founder Shepherd was for 21 years employed by US specialty food company Mrs Fields Famous Brands where she learnt the basics in bakery, frozen desserts and confectionery. She was director of Product Research and Development and was in 1993 transferred to Australia where she became director of International Operations, overseeing franchised operations in 37 countries.

"Galeru was an outgrowth of my background and expertise which I had in formulating products for the food service industry," Shepherd says.

Galeru is the only company in Australia creating a range of confectionery – including cakes, sauces, biscuits, crumbles, a berry drink and yoghurt – using native Australian rainforest berries. Shepherd and her husband David seven years ago planted trees on

their 4.5 hectare property just outside the popular Queensland holiday destination of Noosa. It has only been in the last two years, however, that Galeru has been in commercial operation.

Farming on such a small property, the Shepherds knew they had to grow a high value niche crop to get the maximum out of their land. Galeru began by selling the native fruits – Davidsonia rainforest plums and other fruits the company has trademarked, including Raincherries and Rainberries. But it was soon clear that value adding was necessary and the Shepherds knew baked rainforest confectionery was a truly unique product.

"We don't know of anyone who is doing a range of specialty bakery products using native rainforest fruits," Shepherd said, adding, "and these sauces are quite unique, too. Some people are making jams and liqueurs with some of these species, but we don't know of anyone doing things precisely like this."

Shepherd says that while the trees grow naturally in the Cooroy area, not much is known about growing them in a commercial orchard with the intention of maximising their fruit output.

"We are constantly experimenting and learning, testing different tree spacing, pruning methods, harvesting methods and other techniques. While we

CAKES IN THE RAIN

- unique products
- marketing expertise
- gearing for export

Continues on page 64

