

# Yarta Yering Cellar Door

Open 7 Days from 10am - 5pm

1000 Main Street, Yarra Valley





# Little Yarra Dairy

AT HOME WITH BROWN'S COWS

**C**radled by mountains, the river flat pastures in Launching Place are always green and fecund. If there is a place more perfect for a herd of happy cows, then Tyrone Brown of Little Yarra Dairy would like to know about it. His herd of twelve Jersey cows are the heart of his family-run biodynamic dairy, a shining example of a new breed of micro farmers adopting a progressive way of farming called "Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)."

When Tyrone and his wife Laura and their two young children first purchased the twenty-acre property in 2005, the vision was for a simple country life. Passionate about a healthy way of living (Tyrone is also a Structural Integration, or Rolfing, practitioner and Laura is a nurse), they welcomed the opportunity to relocate from Melbourne to grow their own vegetables and have a house cow for milk and butter. Tyrone, who grew up on a dairy farm in the Otway Ranges, had been searching unsuccessfully for two years for the 'right' property. When a colleague mentioned his grandmother-in-law's property in the Yarra Valley was about to go on the market, Tyrone went to look at it without knowing anyone or anything about the area. The property, which had been a dairy farm until the 1960s, still boasted the original 1950s farmhouse and rudimentary shedding. He remembers driving up the road thinking, *this will do nicely!*

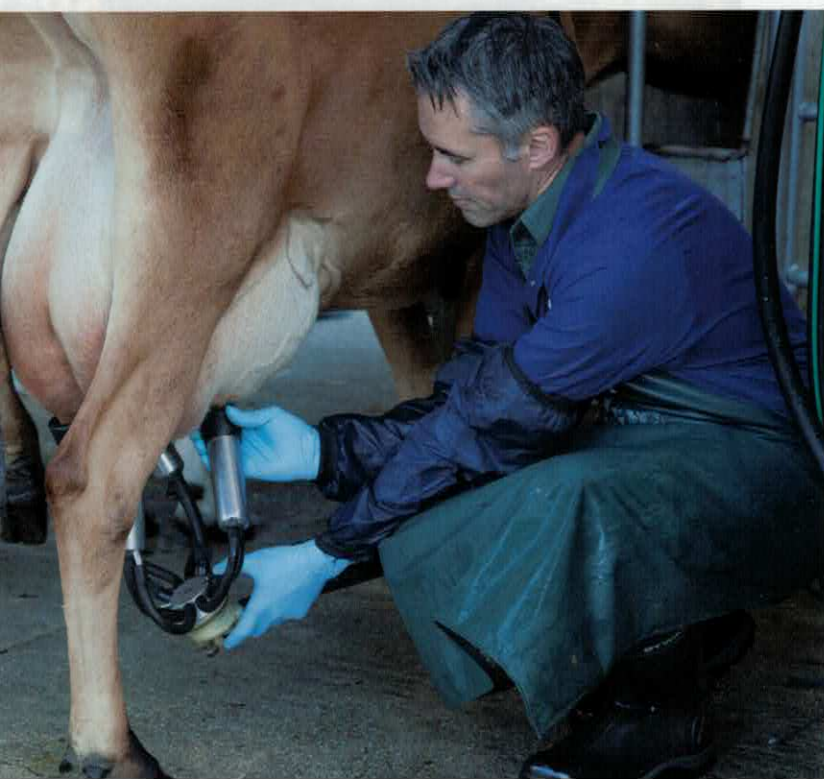
Their first cow Daisy was soon joined by Blossom (it's a tradition for Jersey cows to be named after flowers) and becoming the 'local community dairy' was more a matter of happenstance than planning. "Probiotic-rich raw milk is one of the most nourishing foods on the planet and sought after by many health-conscious people. We found ourselves dealing with many enquiries from the local community," says Tyrone. He realised their little dairy had the potential to support the family and provide the lifestyle they yearned for. Today they are grateful for the







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(Left top) Tyrone enjoying the sunrise with the herd.  
(Above) The dairy is immaculately kept and the cows have a happy, healthy life.

(Right) The kids collecting eggs - one of the simple joys of country life.

150 families supporting their CSA model who are willing to pay the premium price for their product.

The family has resurrected and modernised the old six-bay walk-through dairy to meet the current dairy industry licence requirements and adopted an approach that places animal welfare and regenerative and sustainable practice at the heart of activities. The 'girls' have regular rest periods and spend more time with their calves. "Stress-free cows make the best milk", says Tyrone, "and we provide a natural and varied grazing lifestyle where they get to be expressive and know each other and the farmer. This is very different from large-herd production and kinder on the environment. All manure is composted and worked back into the soil. Biodynamic pasture management is carbon positive and can sequester more carbon back into the soil than native forest!"

Having 'the farmer gene' has given Tyrone the resilience he has needed to overcome some significant hurdles over the last few years. In late 2014, the industry changed suddenly when the state government, instead of developing appropriate regulations, banned all raw milk, and the future of the Little Yarra Dairy was in serious jeopardy. "It was a massive setback, and a traumatic time, and we had to decide if we would go on." For fifteen months, the dairy could not operate.











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(Top) Buttercup and Clover (our cover girl) wonder why there's a photographer on the ground.

(Right) Early morning sunshine in the paddocks.

(Above) Creamy goodness ready for collection by Tyrone's loyal customers.

(Left) Look at those eyes! We've fallen in love with baby Quince Blossom.





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The solution, which was to introduce 'minimally pasteurised' milk (a gentler process at 63 degrees for 30 minutes that preserves some probiotic flora), required a significant investment in equipment and infrastructure to meet certification requirements, and it was the generosity of family, friends and the community, as part of a CSA model, that enabled the dairy to recommence activities in March 2016.

The purebred Jersey cows (selected specifically for their high yielding cream and easy-to-digest protein) are milked every morning, and the farm store buzzes with people collecting their weekly allocations of milk and other seasonal products such as yoghurt and cream. (Milk is also supplied to Stone and Crow, a local cheesemaker, that is then sold in the dairy.) The fresh daily milk is supplied in recyclable glass bottles and crowned with a thick layer of cream. "The flavour is rich and complex and makes the ultimate latte," says Tyrone. His customers say, "It tastes real – like I remember milk used to."



At the heart of Tyrone's philosophy is the small-herd approach that ensures clean, nourishing milk. "I don't want to grow," says Tyrone. "Being a small-scale producer makes it easier to have the highest possible quality control and standards." Having worked in dairies in Switzerland, he has seen firsthand the value of the 'small is beautiful' approach and the way raw milk industries can be successfully and progressively managed. It is a model that Tyrone believes can be successful in many forms of agriculture. He hopes his 'little' dairy is an inspiration to other farmers.

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There is an international body that governs the safe production of regulation raw milk (overseen by RAWMI – The Raw Milk Institute) and many countries in Europe, the UK and the USA are reaping the benefits of a thriving raw milk industry.

"My vision is that one day we will benefit the same way in Australia." ■

For more information about the Australian Raw Milk Movement see [www.ausrawmilk.org](http://www.ausrawmilk.org) and visit [www.facebook.com/littleyarradairy](https://www.facebook.com/littleyarradairy)

(Top left) The office; every inch of Little Yarra Dairy is immaculately kept. (Bottom left) Lily-Pilly gets intimate with the camera.