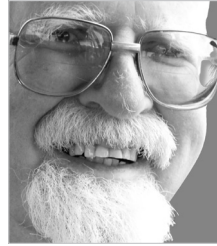


Talking business with Anthony Haas

Passionfruit option for Greytown



Sixty years ago, when I was a primary school boy on Salem farm, Pahiatua, my entrepreneurial mother developed a passionfruit industry on our family sheep farm. Now, as I live in Greytown I wonder if passionfruit and comparable projects could be developed here.

Repeating history

My parents financed my brother and my education by initiating the Salem Hilltop passionfruit brand in our farmhouse. Mum hired about a dozen local people for three months a year over a quarter century to operate the aspects of the business she designed, using knowledge gained from sources as diverse as the Israeli Volcani Institute and New Zealand government and scientific research agencies.

Business basics

Neighbours encouraged Mum to cook up surplus purple passionfruit she found and planted in her garden. Mum gave pulp and juice away, then sold it, and as demand exceeded home garden supply, imported about 13 tons of fresh fruit a year from Te Puke. Dad used the old farm truck to bring the boxes from Pahiatua rail station to a farm shed. My parents had laid concrete on the floor of our house verandas, closed in, and equipped with fruit processing machinery for the season. Fruit was cut in half on a revolving drum, then the pulp was scooped out on a lemon squeezer. Pulp and juice were separated, preserved with sodium benzoate, sugar was added and the different products were filled into bottles, topped and placed in wire baskets in a three square metre pasturiser. Labelling and boxing followed. One of my jobs was to put the skins on the garden. One of Mum's jobs was to drive through the North Island, in the family car full of samples, selling the product. The business was eventually sold to the Te Puke grower. Family folklore said the passionfruit income was better than the livestock income from the 107 acre family farm.

Transferring technology

Householders in and around Greytown have grown passionfruit, and local garden centres know about frost protection cloth, watering, feeding and training passionfruit. If local microclimates are unwelcoming, fruit could be obtained from elsewhere. If sugar is no longer appropriate for adding to pulp or juice, entrepreneurs could freeze the product.

What else could be made in a modern cottage industry?

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