



Happy Tomato Plantation - Emerald Creek via Mareeba

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Who is in your farming family?

My wife farms with me. We have 'BJ' our bitsa dog, 'Rex' our German Shepard, and on my daughter's farm we have pigs, guinea fowl, bantam chooks, chooks and ducks. Her farm is only 7 miles away; that's close in the country.

Where is your farm and what do you farm?

Our farm is at Emerald Creek near Mareeba. We grow vegetables - Lebanese cucumbers, white cucumbers, normal cucumbers, capsicum, yellow capsicum, miniature capsicum, seven different varieties of chilli, black Russian tomatoes, Roma tomatoes, normal tomatoes, four different varieties of cherry tomatoes, Lebanese eggplant, acid free eggplant, normal eggplant, Lebanese zucchini, normal zucchini, squash, shallots, Asian kale, normal kale and a few other things....about 30 different lines.

What is your farming background?

My father was a farmer, so was his father. On my wife's side they were all farmers too. On both sides they were all farmers - ex-tobacco farmers. We have 3 or 4 generations of farmers on both sides of the family.

Farming Memories - What has been so special for you living on a family farm?

I only have one daughter; she's married now with her own farm. But she used to come out into the paddocks with us when she was little. We were picking tomatoes and capsicums. She used to have a little van that she could play in the back of out in the paddock with us. It had teapots and cups and other stuff to play with. She would have been about three. She said, "Daddy would you like me to cook a meal for you?" "What would you like to cook?" I asked her.





“Well I’d like to get some tomatoes, some capsicums and some radishes.”

I told her to go and pick them herself and call us when she was ready for us to come and try it. After a good hour, she tapped on the side of the old van with a screw driver and yelled out, “C’mon, come and get it! But I don’t think it’s too good.” She had made a salad, but to make it better colour she had added dirt and mud to it! What an imagination she had... at that age... I’ll never forget that, ever.

My daughter had a little staffy dog called ‘Budda’. He’s passed away now, but he was always with her. She would run around the farm on her own, when we couldn’t find her, we’d say to Budda, “Go find her,” and off he’d go. She’d be in the carrot patch or something like that. I remember once, we were in the beetroot patch, and there was a Night-Tiger snake, which are pretty harmless, but the dog pushed her away from the snake. Unbelievable! And later on, that poor dog got taken by a snake, a Taipan... this is Taipan country.

Farming Life Experiences - Family farming presents many challenges which often involve considerable effort to resolve. What experiences can you recall which presented you and your family with a significant problem?

I remember about 15 years ago, I was growing all these tomatoes. Back then we didn’t know about all these foreign pests – we got silver white fly. It came into the crops and annihilated all my crops. I had planted about 18 different types of vegies and they were wiped out by this white fly. Actually it was very scary; I nearly had a nervous breakdown. We had been farming intensely like that for a while and all this outlay of money was a real worry. It got to me – the stress and the worries. But with hope and understanding we did pull through. The medicine needed to control that white fly ended up being dish washing liquid. So all this worry and stress, but with trial and error, we succeeded using ordinary old detergent. By the end of the year we pulled off these 2 fantastic crops which made it all worthwhile.

Looking Back - What lessons were learnt? What has your farming life taught you?

Back in the days of my father, you used to say that farming was a great ‘lifestyle’. These days the profit margin is so minimal, you are so stressed to pull the crop off, by any means, otherwise you go backwards. Today, farming is like any business, you have to run it like a business.

It’s a great thing for children to be able to grow up on a farm. Kids get freedom on a farm with less focus on material things. My daughter hardly watched any TV. Kids grow up with honesty and morals – it’s pure. You can see them growing up with a different thought system.

