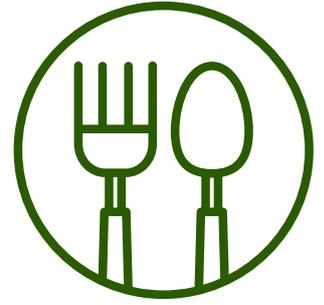


Local Food Innovators: Nurtured Earth Organics



From humble beginnings on a friend's veranda, to a thriving ethical business that feeds families and those in need across the Central Coast, Nurtured Earth Organics always puts people and the planet first.

We recently sat down with co-founder Sonia Romeyn to talk all things organic, business and family.

You've been around for some time now. How did Nurtured Earth Organics begin?

Well, when it all began thirteen years ago, it wasn't even a business. I was a young mum wanting to do the right thing for my family and feed my own babies the very best food. And the only way I could make it happen was to do it myself.

I was surrounded by a tribe of like-minded mums who wanted the same thing and together we started a co-op called Avoca Organics. People would text and say they wanted a box, I'd go to the market and then we'd meet on a friend's veranda and divide it all up.

But as time passed, more people were wanting pesticide and spray-free food without the hassle of the co-op. So I started taking orders, packing them in my garage and delivering boxes of organic fruit and vegetables. It worked that way for about 10 years.

About five years ago, I joined forces with Janine, who I met at a Steiner playgroup and had been a customer, and it evolved into Nurtured Earth Organics.

We're both driven by good food, good health, supporting community and quality time with our families, so it's a great balance. And it's much more fun with two people to share the load.

We know how hard it is for young families to feed their children, and we both always wanted to make real food available at a reasonable price.

We are now a complete grocery store, selling everything you need with the exception of meat. Our motto is 'Local First', so supporting local wholesalers is always our priority.

How many Central Coast families do you feed a week?

We deliver beautiful boxes of real whole food to between 70 - 90 families across the Coast, from The Entrance, Kariong, the Peninsula and the beach suburbs too. It varies every week.

Where do you source your produce?

Our list of local suppliers is constantly growing. Our local farmers are our heroes!

The best part about having local suppliers is that veggies are picked in the morning and fresh in our customers' boxes and homes the very same day. When the farmers deliver our order, it's just so exciting! It smells great, it's crunchy and it tastes great.

Our number one producer is Kieran from [Fiatarone Farms](#). He supplies us with beautiful vegies every week.

[Meliora Farm](#) supply all our amazing citrus and avocados.

Dylan at [Matcham Valley Veggies](#) has been growing delicious salad greens.

Plus we have lovely local suppliers for our coconut products, sauerkrauts, soaps, deodorants, honey, beauty products, toothpaste; and the list goes on!

We've had the pleasure of tasting your traditionally fermented Ginger Beer. It's out of this world. Tell us more about your signature product.

Ah, our Ginger Beer. It's funny it has become our signature product! My aunt used to make it and it was so delicious so I started to experiment and make it myself.

My whole family loves it! I have to tell them to stop drinking it or there'll be none left for our customers.

Our cold press methods ensure the tonic is jam-packed with medicinal and nutritional benefits of organic ginger, Tudibaring limes, rapadura and a whole lot of love, so it's alive and raw.

We love getting out to Avoca Beach Markets to give people a chance to try our ginger beer. They can also taste it at [LikeMinds](#) in Avoca in a glass with fresh mint, or buy it from our [website](#).

How do you stay true to your low waste philosophy?

Having great relationships with our suppliers is key for this. We couldn't do it without them!

Almost all of our fresh produce is delivered without packaging. For those products like English spinach and blueberries which require packaging, our wonderful suppliers take the tubs back for re-use. Together with our suppliers and our customers, we're really creating a closed circle for waste reduction.

We've recently converted to brown paper tape, instead of regular sticky tape, because it is biodegradable and compostable. It's not always cheap doing the right things, but it's just so important. And we're currently looking at eco-friendly options for the recycled Styrofoam boxes we pack our veggies in.

Your random acts of kindness are well known around the Coast. Tell us about your love boxes.

Every week we deliver love boxes to local families who need a helping hand. It's my absolute favourite thing to do!

I love placing a box on someone's door and just kind of running away. I know there have been times in my life when something like that would have been the best gift ever.

We donate \$1 for every order we receive. And our customers donate too, so we are delivering around 2 - 4 love boxes to families in need in each week. Last year we gifted \$8173 of produce to love boxes.

Our customers and the wider community let us know if a family is having a tough time and we package up what they need. It might be a box of fruit and veg, maybe just fruit or snacks for the kids.

We also regularly deliver love boxes to [Coast Shelter](#) and [Mary Mac's](#).

Why is organic and pesticide free produce so important?

I had a strong foundation of healthy eating from my family. I watched my grandmother and aunt raise their families on wholesome, healing, home-grown food.

Then during my 20s I read a lot while travelling about the nasty effects of pesticides, herbicides and glyphosates - not only on our health and hormones, but the whole planet.

While the benefits on our health are so valuable, it's actually much bigger than us as individuals. It's about the earth, the land, the environment. If you take care of your health by eating organic, pesticide free produce, you also take care of the earth.

Do you have any advice for people wanting to introduce organic food into their lives?

I always say, whatever you eat the most of, make that organic.

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) releases their dirty dozen list every year to help consumers keep their families safe from pesticides. It's a fantastic reference!

This year they've included strawberries, spinach, kale, nectarines, apples, grapes, peaches, cherries, pears, tomatoes, celery, potatoes, hot peppers. So it's good to try and steer clear of those items.

We've also got other local options on the Central Coast that support healthy living for the self, planet and the community including _____ and the

[Food Integrity Group \(FIG\)](#) [Avoca Beach Growers Market](#).

You can even start your own co-op like we did back in the day.



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