

## PEOPLE: JACQUI HARVEY, YARRA VALLEY GOURMET FOODS



After a lengthy career in the food industry across sales, marketing, product development and food management - and with a romantic vision of Valley life - Jacqui Harvey felt it was time for a change of scenery, and decided to put her skills to good use through the purchase of her very own boutique manufacturing business, Yarra Valley Gourmet Foods (YVGF).



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Under the direction of Jacqui, YVGF has experienced its most exciting growth over the past six years. She is passionate about her industry and all things Yarra Valley, enjoying being involved in forums where she has the opportunity to express her ideas, stimulate the sharing of information and resources, and generally ensuring the longevity of small to medium manufacturers in the face of this current challenging environment. Championing local produce and continuing the proud tradition of quality 'hand made' products, YVGF ensures the use of as much fresh and local produce as possible across its portfolio, which includes Yarra Valley Preserves, Yarra Valley Larder and Mad Dog (chilli range).

### What was the key to starting your own business and the idea behind it?

After a vast career in food sales and marketing, including successfully managing a confectionary manufacturing business for many years, I decided it was time for me to run my own venture. Given my background in confectionary I felt I was best placed in the packaged food sector. I believe in manufacturing so much so I'd consider myself an advocate, and decided to channel this passion into my business.

### How did you realise your dream and turn that dream into a reality?

I did a lot of research and investigated various food segments that appealed to me. After many months of searching I found a lovely little confectionery manufacturer for sale in the Yarra Valley that had great opportunity for growth. With a romantic vision of 'valley life', I purchased Yarra Valley Preserves... and as they say the rest is history.

### Where you are at right now in terms of your business and where you see the business going?

So much has changed! What started with myself and two staff in the kitchen, has grown significantly within five years to now having 10 staff on board.

We have expanded distribution nationally and developed new product ranges and brands, which we will continue to do. Another exciting development will see Yarra Valley Gourmet Foods moving to our newly acquired acreage, where we will develop a unique food tourism experience. We want customers to see where their food comes from and the work that goes into creating a delicious end product. For example, visitors will be able to pick a tomato, make and take home a tomato relish.



### As a woman helping other women what have you found to be some of the biggest challenges that we face in becoming the best version of themselves and reaching their goals?

We tend to suffer self-doubt, lacking belief that we can actually achieve our goals on our own. We are also quite emotional beings and take personally negative comments. I've found that refocusing negative energy and maintaining a determined, can-do attitude has by far been the greatest asset in helping to achieve my business and personal goals.

### What is your advice for those facing such challenges in business and life and overcoming these obstacles to success?

As a woman, we are actually pretty good organisers so it's important to set clear goals and timeframes to achieve milestones. I think it's also crucial to collaborate and share ideas so, find yourself a good mentor and download to them often- this will help reaffirm you are on the right path and motivate you during rough patches.

### What is your most important business strategy that can be applied to business or other aspects of life?

It may sound simple, but having a clear written plan that I refer to often is the most important thing for me. I've found that there's no point having all your ideas and goals in your head. You need to see them written as it makes them real and tangible. Put your plan somewhere you can see it every day, review it regularly and alter it accordingly. One thing I do and I recommend to anyone is to celebrate all milestone achievements; this can include giving yourself a day off, buying something you've been admiring for a while or heading out to a top notch restaurant.



### As a business owner what tip would you give to other women starting their own business or working towards their career to be productive and reach goals?

Passion is an essential ingredient for any successful start-up. You need to love what you do- enjoying your chosen life's work is paramount. Working for yourself can be extremely difficult and stressful but when you have passion and drive even the most tumultuous times can be overcome.

### One of the motto's I have with the magazine is that firstly, it is okay to 'have it all' and secondly, I believe that you can have it all. What do you say to that statement? What does having it all mean to you?

I think that's okay if you know what "having it all" means...! Obviously, it's a phrase that means different things to different people - for me, I don't believe I 'have it all', but I do strive to have health and happiness, and the love and support from family and friends.

### In terms of business success, can you give our readers five key tips to inspire them?

1. Surround yourself with positive and encouraging people
2. Celebrate your successes, no matter how small or large
3. Acknowledge and learn from your mistakes
4. Employ those more knowledgeable than yourself
5. Create a team environment and inclusive culture

For more information on YVGF head to <http://www.yarravalleygourmetfoods.com.au>