

Beauty and the Bees naturally ahead of the game

From humble beginnings selling handmade natural skincare products on a card table at Salamanca market 25 years ago, Jill Saunders' persistence is really paying off.

Jill is the founder of Beauty and the Bees, a Tasmanian business that prides itself on using Earth friendly packaging and edible ingredients, which are continuing to grow in popularity. It is thanks to this ethos that Jill estimates that Beauty and the Bees has helped save about 1 million plus pieces of plastic from being discarded in landfill.



It was the Franklin Dam protests that first attracted Jill to Tasmania, with her eventually relocating from London in the early 1990s. "I was blown away by the beauty of (Tasmania) I rode around the perimeter of Australia and then came down here. I couldn't believe it, it was like Disneyland," she says.

It is therefore no surprise that leatherwood honey, which Jill describes as "like rainforest in a jar" is the core ingredient of the entire range of Beauty and the Bees products. Jill has taken a back-to-basics approach to making skincare products from high quality food ingredients, with the business commencing from her home kitchen.



After outgrowing a number of locations and factories, the retail outlet for Beauty and the Bees product is now based in Salamanca – a return to the place that got everything started.

Seeing the damage plastic was making in places like South East Asia, Jill set out from the start to use as little plastic as possible.

"I realised at least 35 years ago there would be a massive problem (with plastic)," Jill says.

And while admitting that "it's been very, very hard" to find alternatives, Beauty and the Bees products are typically housed in glass, tin, paper and cardboard containers.



"By rethinking the way her business views waste, this persistence is delivering benefits not only to Beauty and the Bees customers, but to all Tasmanians."

The business shreds second-hand cardboard with its own shredder for use when packing orders. It also uses biodegradable corn-starch spoons instead of plastic with its creams and while there are some plastic lids used on some products, Jill is confident there will be more alternatives coming onto the market in the next five years.

Jill says thanks to initiatives such as Plastic Free July, Beauty and the Bees is getting more recognition for its approach. And while other manufacturers are playing catch up, Beauty and the Bees is ahead of the game. "People want (their skincare products) to be in alternative materials, we don't have to do anything ... the consciousness is there, it is really great for us."

Thanks to the Internet, Beauty and the Bees is also making a huge impact overseas. "I've had a website for 23 years ... 12-15 iterations, none of them ever worked. It's only in the past 5 years we've had one that really works," Jill says. One of the products, which Jill admits "started out as a joke" - Professor Edward J Fuzzworthy's Beard Detangler & Deep Conditioner - has become one of the company's most successful products overseas. "We've sold over 100,000 bars of the beard product ... a US reseller picked it up and at one stage it was number one best seller on Amazon," Jill says with pride. "The US is really starting to grow ... and we (also) have a loyal customer base who have been with us for a long time."

With a core staff of about 10, Jill is now looking at ways to grow the business. "We have limited resources ... (but) we are exploring our options," Jill says. While she has never received "any government support in any form", Jill says the company has grown thanks to persistence, which she says is the main reason for her success.

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RETHINK....

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