

Native foods are a growing business



Björn and Claudia Form from Australian Native Bush Products

AUSTRALIAN Native Bush Products has been selling native food produce for the past 12 months after two years of experimentation with native fruits and seeds.

Claudia and Björn Form grow native foods at Young's Siding between Albany and Denmark and process their produce into an extensive range of jams, preserves, sauces and spices.

The husband and wife team also run Lilli Pilli Café at Denmark, where they do their best to increase local awareness of indigenous Australian foodstuffs.

"Australian people are very aware of Asian food and European food but I don't think they know they have their own native food," Mr Form said.

"When we are at the markets there are always a lot of questions to answer - it's not easy, it's not like growing tomatoes.

"But we wanted to do something different."

And for the Forms, this is very different. The pair packed up their jobs in Switzerland (an engineer and a sec-

retary) bought their property on the internet, and transformed themselves into farmers.

"We didn't know a thing about farming and plants - so we had to learn it all - irrigation and soil - it was all very new for us."

"There was very little support for this type of thing in WA as no one was growing these things, other than sandalwood and quandong," he said.

Among the more popular native foods the Forms are growing is native lemon myrtle, cinnamon myrtle and honey seed myrtle as well as wattle seeds and lilli pillis.

While the Lilli Pilli Café at Denmark and stalls at the Albany and Denmark markets are helping their exposure to the local market, the Forms have their eyes firmly set on the export market.

"The idea for us is to export. What we're doing is presenting our products as processed foods like jams, sauces and spices," Mrs Form said.

"We definitely think there is a growing market for Australian native produce," she said.