

Yarra Valley Caviar – setting the benchmark in quality

Ask Mark Fox and Nick Gorman of Yarra Valley Caviar about their operation, and they'll say it's a small fresh aquaculture farm on the Rubicon River in the Yarra Valley Ranges run by two Aussie blokes, committed to treating their fish humanely and looking after the river.

The business is in fact one of the only fresh water aquaculture farms of its kind to take a completely natural approach to rearing, and milking, its Atlantic Salmon—refusing to use antibiotics or hormones.

Its fish are given plenty of room to move, milked entirely by hand, and then gently returned to the long earthen ponds in the Victorian Alps of the Yarra Valley ranges which they call home.

It is a staunch believer in not only treating its fish humanely, but ensuring the long-term sustainability of the river—and already follows strict UK soil association guidelines for organic aquaculture.

Hit by the Black Saturday fires, the global financial crisis, and severe flooding, Mark is the first to admit it hasn't been an easy road—but the passion and commitment of this humble duo has kept the business on its feet.

"More than 13 tonne of our fish were wiped out in the fires, so caviar became our mainstay. We've been lucky that because of the quality of the product, we've managed to hold our position and grow our sales."



In fact, Yarra Valley Caviar has just launched another new product to market, a premium line of roe from young salmon, who have never been milked before, as part of its 2012 winter caviar harvest.

At just three years old, the caviar is softer and more palatable – making it effectively the 'veal' of the salmon family.

The caviar is taken as it comes from the salmon after milking and simply brined on site at the farm using Murray River pink salt flakes and organic sugar, and packaged in 40-gram traditional tins.



Nick says the demand by top chefs around the country for its products is driven from its processes in treating the fish humanely, and ensuring they have plenty of space to move, which translates to the quality on the plate.

“We raise our fish in long earthen ponds beside the river which are fed by waterfalls which create a strong current in which the fish swim, so they’re living in their own natural environment.

“With no added antibiotics or chemicals, the fish thrive in the cold, clean and clear waters and are very active, therefore producing a leaner texture, superior body tone and significantly lower fat content.

“A healthier environment makes for a healthier fish and that translates to the quality of the caviar.”

He says the fact that the fish are not stressed also means higher proportions spawn, and because the milking process is a gentle one, the eggs are plump and flawless.

And it’s not just the fish and their environment which is natural – the eggs themselves are drained of fluid and packed immediately, with no additives.

The quality of the caviar and its stringent processes certainly hasn’t gone unnoticed.

Yarra Valley Caviar was a finalist at the Delicious 2012 Produce Awards, took out silver and bronze at the 2011 Sydney Royal Fine Food Show and was a finalist in two categories by what are regarded Australia’s most prestigious environmental awards – the Banksia Environmental Foundation Awards. ○

This page: The award-winning caviar from Yarra Valley Caviar is the result of two Aussie blokes looking after their fish humanely. Right: Mark Fox milking an Atlantic Salmon.



Quality products from the fresh waters of the Rubicon River

Its multi-award winning caviar comes from Atlantic Salmon which are gently hand-milked under a completely natural anesthetic, and then returned to their natural environment. The eggs are drained of fluid and packed on site immediately, with no additives or preservatives.

The result is large, round, flawless balls of roe, which burst with flavour.

Yarra Valley Caviar’s caviar products include its Autumn Harvest roe, which is caviar from salmon, which have never been milked.

It also has various sizes of glass jars of its renowned classic roe.

As well as caviar, Yarra Valley Caviar has a selection of salmon products including whole salmon and smoked salmon.

Yarra Valley Caviar has also most recently launched a line of premium trout.

The trout are reared naturally in the same way it grows its Atlantic Salmon, without antibiotics and hormones, and will be available year round sold as whole baby trout and whole smoked trout, which is smoked in a local mountain ash hardwood. ○

