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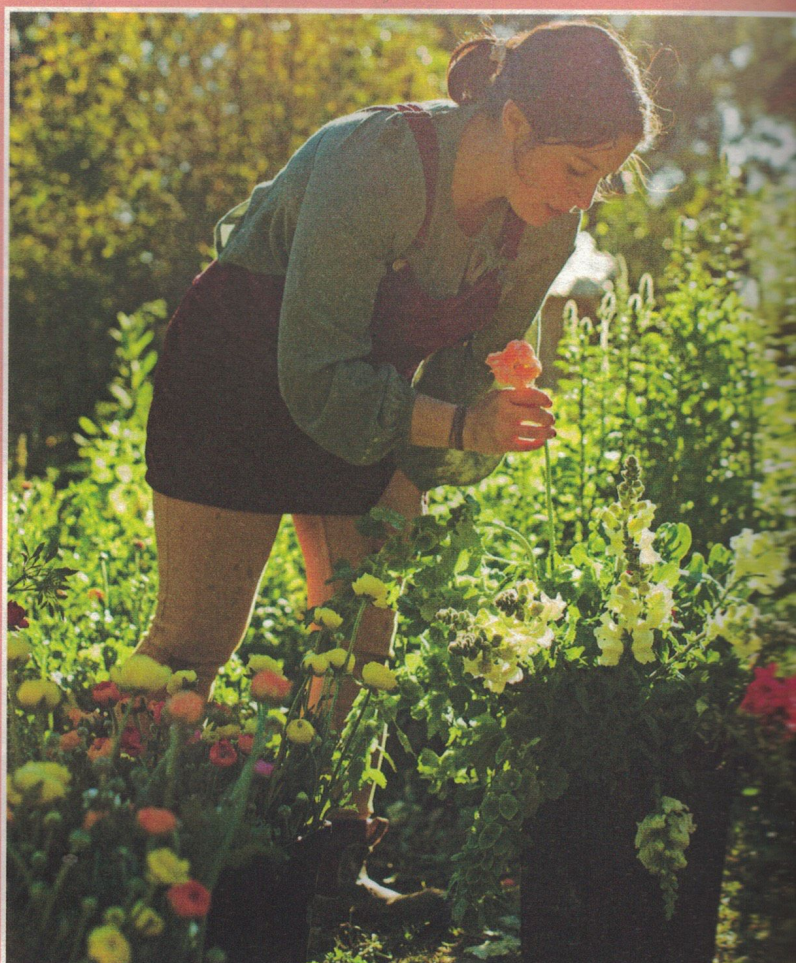
Save money and reduce waste with meal plans and recipes from QCWA Country Kitchens

OLIVE GAP FARM

FROM FOLK SINGERS TO FARMERS

When professional musicians Tara Luca and Alex O'Reilly moved to the country, they had their minds set on creating a sustainable lifestyle, growing food and building a house off-grid while raising their daughters. Little did they know they were about to embark on a fantastic new business venture.

Words by **Ally Martell** Images by **Rohani Binti**, and **Bonnie Sevil** from **Lilly at Dawn Photography**



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In 2016 Alex and Tara joined forces with Tess O'Reilly (Alex's sister) and her partner Nina to buy Olive Gap Organic Farm, at Woodburn near Byron Bay, from 80-year-old Arthur Brown who had run a Tea Tree distillery on the property for more than 30 years.

"We wanted a sustainable rural lifestyle living off the land and home-schooling our children," said Tara.

"Then Arthur started mentoring us in the Tea Tree business, and we were hooked."

As far as Tea Tree farms go, Olive Gap Farm is quite petite; just 48 hectares with 16 hectares of Tea Trees (although more are being planted). It produces high quality eco-friendly oil using traditional wood-fired steam distillation methods that were originally developed in the 1920s.

"Keeping it small means that we can grow, distil and bottle the oil ourselves here on the farm, which is quite unique," said Tara. "Our oil is of exceptional quality and a very sustainable product."

Heirloom flowers are in high demand for weddings and special events around the Byron Bay area, so the family expanded their business to include around 2000m² of seasonal cut flowers.

"Holistic management and sustainable farming practices make up for size and enable us to produce a variety of quality seasonal cut flowers including old world fragrant roses, dahlias, ranunculus, snapdragons, sunflowers, stocks and tuberose."

"As we are located in the sub-tropics, we can pretty much grow all year round, we just change what we are growing to suit the season," she said.

"Spring starts in August here and it is our busiest season. We tend to back off during summer when it's very hot and there are more pests around."

"It is fulfilling and empowering to be able to run a business in line with our ethics and know we are producing unique, high quality products."

