



Photo: Kelli Uidal

Carmel Valley Family Builds its Business on Berries

BY RENEE BRINCKS

Carmel Berry Company was founded by Katie and Ben Reneker to utilize the immunity boosting properties of elderberries. They found elderberry syrup helps battle colds.

Katie and Ben Reneker were exploring natural immunity boosters when they encountered research on the anti-viral, anti-inflammatory potential of elderberries. To combat the colds their young sons frequently brought home from school, the Renekers started taking a small daily dose of elderberry syrup.

"We all liked it, and more importantly, we felt like it helped," says Katie.

When a subsequent search for organic options fell short, the Carmel Valley couple planted their own berries and developed some simple recipes. Three years later, they bottle and sell their elderflower cordial and cold-pressed elderberry syrup under the Carmel Berry Co. label. Products are available online and at nearly 20 regional retailers, including Carmel Valley

Mercantile and Carmel Belle.

Customers drizzle the company's antioxidant-rich, small-batch creations over salads and ice cream, and stir them into smoothies, cocktails and sparkling water.

The family foraged for wild berries before the 2016 Soberanes Fire, and now sources some organic fruit from the Midwest. They are also working with area farmers to develop a steady local supply.

"When it comes to the potential of this plant, we're just scratching the surface," Katie says. "Because elderberries grow right here, we can support small farmers and local businesses as we create these products."

For information on orders and store listings, please visit www.carmelberry.com.