

NEWS



Hillbilly hit: Tessa and Shane McLaughlin's Bilpin apple cider, featuring Shields Orchard's trademarked 'Julie' apples, is taking the Sydney marketplace by storm.

Bilpin bottler

by Justine Geake

A BILPIN couple has made a successful business venture out of the shady reputation of people who live in "them thar hills", with the latest accolade being a bronze medal in the Australian Cider Awards at Surry Hills last Friday night.

Tessa and Shane McLaughlin have started up Hillbilly Cider which uses local Bilpin apples, and it has been getting very positive reactions.

"We launched the cider at three growers' markets last month – northern beaches, Castle Hill and Sydney," Ms McLaughlin said.

"We were blown away by the response – everyone loved the cider, name and packaging.

"We've been absolutely flat out this week driving around the mountains stocking up our outlets."

Some batches are made at their Bilpin home using wild yeast fermentations and some are made in more commercial quantities at their winery in Warren.

And most of the apples are from Bilpin, supplied

by well-known local orchardist and Rural Fire Brigade stalwart Bill Shields.

"The cider is predominantly Bill Shield's apples, including some of his 'Julies' – which is an apple he has created and trademarked," Ms McLaughlin said.

"The exact blend of apples we don't broadcast as we like it to be our trade secret. We can say that we use all the Aussie classic cultivars such as pink ladies, granny smiths, sundowners and the Julie."

The couple are marketing it through independent bottleshops and at bars and restaurants.

Local outlets include the Apple Bar, Bilpin; the Bottl'O at Kurmond; Kurrajong Cellars; Lochiel House at Kurrajong Heights, and several Blue Mountains outlets.

And new ideas are in the pipeline for other products – a pear cider will be launched next month, and Mr McLaughlin has just gone to Herefordshire and Somerset, the home of cider in the UK, for the apple harvest, to work with a few cider makers there and share techniques.



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