



Oh, Christmas Tree

The smell of a fresh Christmas tree evokes fond memories. We meet a Queensland family ensuring that pine trees continue to be a part of Yuletide tradition

BY Cath Johnsen

In the rocky farmlands of the aptly named Granite Belt region in South West Queensland, local farmers Brad and Katrina Fraser are as happy as pigs in mud, or perhaps a more fitting idiom might be, as merry as reindeers in snow.

It often surprises visitors to hear that it *does* occasionally snow in this elevated patch of Queensland countryside, or at the very least, it receives a decent and regular frost,

Giggling at the memory, she adds that growing up on a Christmas farm that is open all year round means that her kids will spontaneously sing 'Jingle Bells' in August and offer pointed opinions on Christmas styling.

When asked if they ever tire of listening to Christmas carols, Katrina chuckles again and says that this is the question they are most often asked.

Brad jokes that it was "a bit rough" having to listen to carols all day at first but concedes that they've grown so accustomed to hearing them now that [any other music] just wouldn't feel right.

I'm a little star ... young Evelyn does her bit to help the family business



CHRISTMAS MUSIC IS CRUCIAL TO CREATING THE RIGHT AMBIANCE, ALL YEAR ROUND

Katrina agrees that Christmas music is crucial to creating the right ambience, whichever month it is.

Earlier this year, the hard-working Fraser family were dealt another blow when the COVID-19 pandemic shut down their business for two months

over a usually busy Easter season.

Ever innovative, the pair listed their stock online, and were overwhelmed by the supportive response from customers. Despite

having to "count every dollar", they were able to stay afloat, and once their doors were able to safely open again, visitors began flocking back.

With no option but to holiday locally, many visitors to the farm tell the Frasers that they had planned to celebrate a white Christmas in Europe, Canada or North America, but have instead opted for the next best thing – a visit to the Granite Belt Christmas Farm and Queensland's coldest town.

Ironically though, despite owning a Christmas farm with all the trimmings, the Frasers plan to spend a quiet Christmas day away in their caravan, with their holiday beginning on Christmas Eve after the last Christmas tree has been felled and wheeled out through the farm's gates.

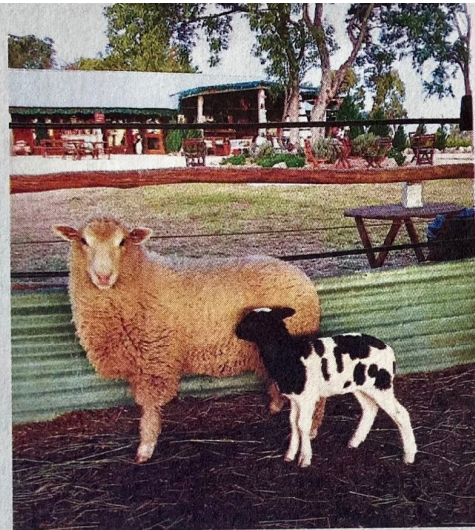
Christmas Day will consist of an

uncomplicated lunch and cocktails by the pool, Katrina says, while the kids will simply be overjoyed that Santa has remembered to deliver their gifts to the caravan, and not the farm.

"For me, Christmas is about joy, magic and family," Katrina says, looking fondly at her children. "I think you go through different stages of Christmas in your lifetime - there's your own childhood Christmas, and then when you're in your 20s it's more about partying, but once you've had kids, it takes on a whole new meaning."

Brad agrees and says that it gives him great satisfaction to help other families start or continue the tradition of having a real Christmas tree in their home.

"We're not just here to sell a product and make a coin," he enthuses.



Away in a manger ... petting the farm animals is popular among the visitors

"We're trying to help people create great memories. I mean, lots of kids are going to receive the best presents under my tree. They're never going to forget that." **R**

World's Slowest Music

A musical composition designed to take well over 600 years to play had its first chord change in seven years in September. Entitled 'As Slow as Possible', the composition by the late avant-garde American composer John Cage is due to be played out over 639 years at the St. Burchardi church in Halberstadt in Germany.

Needless to say, no one will hear the piece in its entirety. Fans flocked to the church to witness the event and there was also a livestream. The performance started in 2001 on an organ specially built for the super slow-paced recital. If all goes to plan, the performance will come to an end in 2640. Fans will have a relatively short wait for the next momentous occasion, however, as the next chord change is due in February 2022. **CNN**

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