

# alicia parker



## watchthisface

She started as a lawyer, got a crush on juices, and now her organic range has shot to the top of the tree.

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**Alicia Parker had an early induction to the fruit juice industry** as a fresh-faced 13-year-old sales rep working with her father at his Mr Juicy stand at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. "It was good school holiday pocket money," she says.

The tables turned 25 years later when she asked her father to work for her, selling a new generation of fresh organic fruit juice. "You're never sure whether your children are going to be interested in going into your business. But this is a complete reversal. I've gone into her business," says John Crisp, 60, who sold Mr Juicy to Berri 20 years ago and then came out of semi-retirement to work with his daughter. "I'm not used to working for someone else, but she knows what she wants and doesn't take any nonsense."

This approach has seen the business grow from one that sold only orange juice to one with a range of six organic juices and six sparkling mineral waters.

A little more than two years after the first orange was squeezed, Parker's Organic Juices are served in some of our top restaurants and boutique grocers. The business recently made its first foray into Melbourne, and the Brisbane launch is expected later this year. Parker is also about to launch a product range for children, and plans to export to Asia.

The 37-year-old former corporate lawyer has always had a passion for fresh produce, but she took an interest in organics after advice from naturopaths when she was trying to get pregnant. "Organics is about taking control of where your food comes from," she says. "You go to a supermarket and all the vegetables are wrapped up in plastic and you think, how many chemicals has that gone through? With the meat, you wonder what have they been feeding those cows? You know that farms are just getting bigger and bigger and it is all about cutting costs. So now I'm supplying something I'd be happy to buy."

All her juice is sourced from certified organic growers, but that has its problems. "There are very few who can supply 10 or 12 half-tonne bins of oranges a week because a lot of organic farmers embrace the idea of small farms," she says. So Parker has to look far and wide to find the right produce.

While most juice companies are close to the orchards, Parker's factory is in Peakhurst, in south-west Sydney. "We ship our fruit in [close to the city] so we can get it to our restaurants and shops as fresh as possible," she says.

Supplying a fresh product with a short shelf life was a challenge. "It has taken a lot longer and a lot more money than I thought," she says. "There have been times when I've thought, is it really worth going on with?" But support from restaurants and cafes such as Pier, Otto and bills has kept her going.

The company employs 10 staff and Parker's main role is now in financial operations, but she has been involved in all aspects of the business. "In the early days when we didn't have many staff, I remember being out [at the factory], being seven months' pregnant, and one of the factory hands hadn't turned up and I was literally filling the bottles of juice for the next day."

Parker now has a son, Max (pictured), who is nearly three, an 18-month-old daughter, Matilda, and a third child is due this month. She previously worked as a corporate lawyer at Gilbert + Tobin and as in-house counsel at One.Tel before starting her own legal consultancy. But she was determined to find more flexible working hours. "My priority was to be a mother and have a family. I think a lot of women lawyers say that so they go back part-time, but then they don't really hit the career goals they want – like partnership. They have to compromise."

With no marketing budget, the company still has a relatively low profile and Parker says her presence at the farmers' markets in Sydney has been an important part of building brand awareness. And working behind the fruit juice stand is a role she's accustomed to, having learned the skills as a 13-year-old.

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