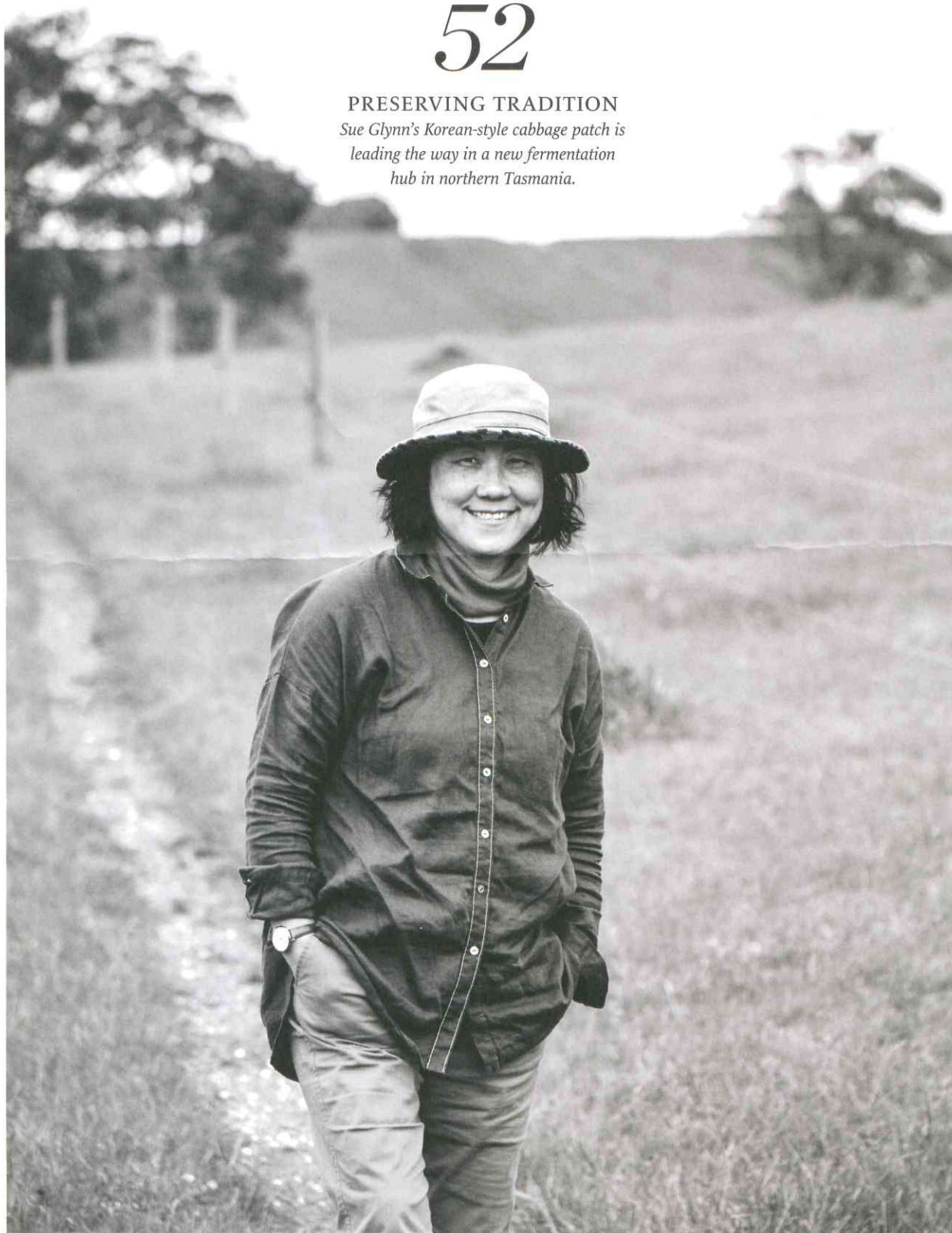


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PRESERVING TRADITION

Sue Glynn's Korean-style cabbage patch is leading the way in a new fermentation hub in northern Tasmania.



PHOTOGRAPH BY OLIVER FORD

After staking out 1.2 hectares for a vegetable garden, Sue and her husband run Red Angus cattle on the remainder of their small farm.

“Fermentation is very important, not just for HUMAN BEINGS but for the environment in general,” Sue says.





Sue grows and ferments several types of brassicas. **Right** Tools of the trade. Sue makes the charcoal from trees on the farm and uses it as a purifier when making her compost soil remedy.

in a region better known for broadacre vegetable cropping, snap-frozen carrots and dusty spuds. The sharply acidic, umami tang of fermented cabbage was an acquired taste, and its time was yet to come in Tasmania's North West.

"I felt that people didn't really understand the product," says Sue, who has been making it all her life.

Before moving from Sydney to Stanley with her husband Tom in 2015, Seoul-raised Sue had no agricultural experience. She leapt in with her boots on when a local farmer loaned her an acre of land.

"He came along in a big tractor and dug the ground for me to make the beds," she says.

She settled on growing cabbages to make a gourmet range of kimchi to sell locally. When, two years on, she and Tom decided to buy 40 hectares nearby, Sue immediately staked her claim to a 1.2 hectare patch for an organic vegetable garden. The couple runs Red Angus cattle on the rest of the land.

"At first I was weeding acres by hand with a long knife," says the 54-year-old, smiling. "If I looked too far up a row, it made me tired and unmotivated. It was one step at a time. We invested in one improvement at a time. I went from a hand hoe to a small tractor, then a few years later a transplanter and a weeder. Now I have all the toys."

At last, she is also finding a ready market for kimchi, with sales soaring. "COVID woke people up to what they ate and the importance of gut health," she says.

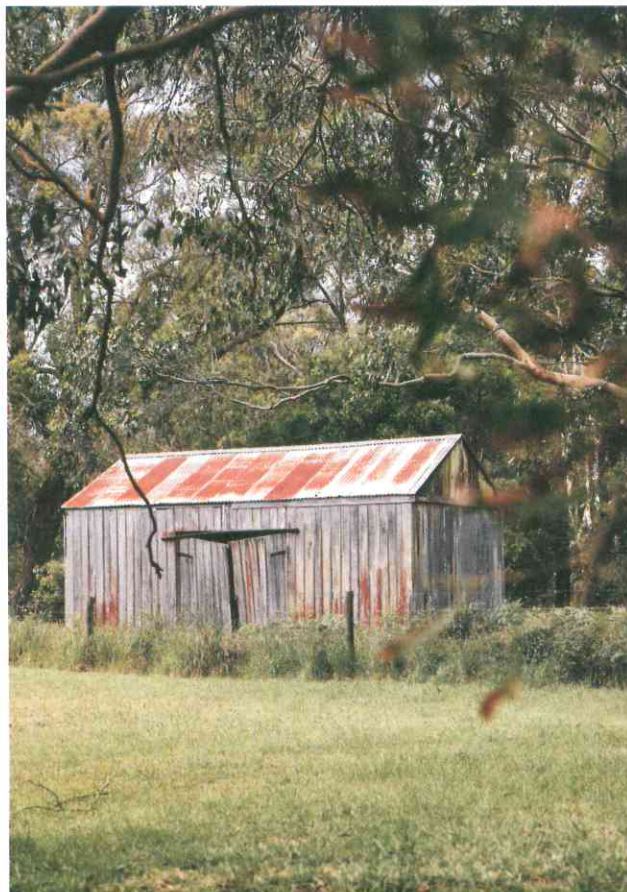
It was a year or two before the pandemic began that Sue discovered JADAM, a system of organic farming developed over the past three decades by Korean horticulturist Youngsang Cho. She describes her copy of his book, *JADAM Organic Farming*, as her bible. Combining old and contemporary cultivation techniques to achieve great microbial diversity, the JADAM way also promises "ultra low-cost agriculture". Mostly, these savings are achieved by eschewing any chemical fertilisers and pesticides in favour of farm-made remedies or those developed by JADAM.

"The price of synthetic fertilisers, already very expensive, has simply gone through the roof since the Russian and Ukrainian war began last year," Sue says.

For fertiliser, she swears by her own six-month fermentation of vegetable scraps, red dirt, grass, boiled potato and seaweed meal. She uses cinnamon powder to reduce fungi in soils. And she wards off cabbage moths by adding Eco-oil or canola oil and a wormwood infusion to her fertiliser remedy before spraying. Crops are most at risk from pests when young and tender, so that's when she sprays. As her cabbages mature, Sue relies on their many leafy outer layers to repel pests. If slugs and snails munch on the outermost layer, who really cares?

"It's not about perfection," she says. **E**

The author visited North West Tasmania as a guest of the Stanley & Tarkine Forage Festival. For more information about Sue's products, visit kimchime.com.au



Clockwise, from above KimchiMe is a small operation in Tasmania's North West; planting out brassica seedlings; three of the offerings from KimchiMe; hand tools and traditional Korean Zzogri wearable farm stools. **Opposite page** The rich red soil of Stanley, Tasmania.



FERMENTATION IS AT the heart of Sue Glynn's KimchiMe, a brassica business based in the rich red soil of Stanley in Tasmania's North West. Not only are Sue's traditional Korean food products fermented, so are the all-natural fertiliser and pesticide she makes for her crops.

"Fermentation is very important, not just for human beings but for the broader environment in general," Sue explains. "I am making my kimchi for gut health and I'm fermenting my remedy for soil health."

In embracing the ancient Korean technique, Sue is not only honouring her heritage. She is part of a push in Tasmania to develop value-added food products through fermentation. Cabbage becomes kimchi, a staple side dish of Korea, through a process of lacto-fermentation over several days. So far Sue's organic, gluten-free, dairy-free vegan range comprises three cabbage kimchis, a 'Red Russian' kale and a beetroot kimchi, and a probiotic shot drink that she sells in a six pack.

Restaurateur and gin maker Kim Seagram, who chairs the state's new fermentation hub, is a big fan. "Sue is doing a fantastic

job," says Kim, who regularly stocks up at the KimchiMe stall at the weekly Harvest Launceston farmers' market. She recently enticed Sue to share her story with students from the University of Tasmania's new two-year Associate Degree in Applied Science (Fermentation and Separation).

FermenTasmania, the organisation Kim chairs, is in the final stages of building a \$7.5 million federally funded facility for the agrifood sector in Launceston, which was recognised in 2021 as the world's 49th Creative City of Gastronomy by UNESCO. The industry-focused innovation centre will function as a proving ground for fermentation start-ups.

"It's about adding value to our primary produce through fermentation before it leaves our shores," Kim says. "Think barley into beer, milk into cheese, grapes into wine, cabbage into kimchi. Even chocolate and coffee have fermentation elements."

In making kimchi locally and at scale, Sue Glynn is in the vanguard of a new era in everyday vegetable agribusiness.

"In the beginning years, it was a lonely journey," Sue says, explaining that it took a few years to find a solid customer base >



Sue Glynn of KimchiMe,
with a harvest of red cabbages
to be turned into kimchi.



Preserving tradition

A cabbage farmer and kimchi maker brings
Korean growing and fermenting
techniques to a boutique agribusiness.

Words Amanda Ducker Photography Oliver Ford

