



Meet California Kiwi Grower Jane Criswell

Mallard Lake Ranch, Nipomo, California



Grower:
Jane Criswell

Industry:
Kiwi
Nipomo, California



"Why not buy local? It's a simple choice that is best for our neighbors, communities and our state. Buying Californian Grown means it supports California's economy so that money can be reinvested back into the land and into our communities."

-Jane Criswell

Don and Jane Criswell own and operate Mallard Lake Ranch in Nipomo on California's Central Coast growing kiwifruit and avocados with their son, Bob, his wife and their two children. Other than a part time employee, the whole operation is managed by the Criswell family.

Jane Criswell is a fifth generation farmer who was raised on a family dairy farm in Wisconsin where her great-great grandfather tended 40 acres of land received through a land grant signed by President Polk. Although a love of working the land came early in life for Jane, she was a teacher who, along with husband Don, an electrical engineer by trade, sought a change in mid-life and decided to purchase the ranch in 1988.

To carry on the Criswell tradition, son Bob proudly continues to work the land he grew up on. Bob's two children are the 7th generation Criswell farmers who are involved with the harvest alongside mom, dad, grandma and grandpa.

The Criswell's kiwifruit vineyard was planted in 1978 and today produces more than 65,000 pounds of kiwifruit. Kiwi is a seasonal fruit which grows May through October, one of the few fruits harvested during the winter months.

For the Criswells, the California lifestyle is what they enjoy most about being California growers. "Farming has so many variables – most of all the weather," said Jane Criswell. "It determines the condition and volume of the crop, and ultimately the sales and profits. But in the end, it all comes down to having pride in what you do, being stewards of the land, working outside and being able to operate a business with family."

At the ranch, the Criswell family practices 100 percent sustainable farming and use organic fertilizer whenever possible, without use of pesticides or herbicides.

"For Californians, buying California Grown means buying products produced in their backyard – directly from fellow Californians," Jane said. "These products have not traveled thousands of miles. Whenever possible, buying local products helps the environment and cuts down on shipping products and transportation costs."

The fact that Mallard Lake Ranch is family-owned and operated is a particular point of pride for Jane. "In today's world, it can be rare to have a grandfather, son and grandson working side-by-side together. It's a true collaboration," she said.

To learn more information about California's kiwifruit industry, visit www.kiwifruit.org.

