



**C**old-pressed juices couldn't be hotter. They used to be a niche product, mostly the preserve of muesli-munching health-food fanatics bent on cleansing and detoxifying body and mind with nutrient-dense nectars. But now they are slipping into the mainstream as "super-premium juices" bubbling with business opportunities and stimulating excited interest worldwide.

Potent bursts of free promotion in the form of spontaneous endorsements from big-name stars such as Beyoncé and Gwyneth Paltrow who take regularly to social media to preach the benefits of these "liquid salads", has helped boost demand and raise the profile of cold-pressed/raw juices globally.

Drivers of cold-pressed juices in South Africa, as in other countries, are the global health and wellness trend and the rise of the "conscious consumer".

But is it just marketing hype, or are these raw juices really healthier than pasteurised juices made with masticators or centrifuges?

Health claims for cold-pressed juices appear to be limited only by the imagination. Despite the hype, common sense and gut instinct on their own are sufficient to suggest that these juices do indeed deliver a strong health proposition by virtue of being 100% natural with no added sugars, colourants, or preservatives and extracted without heat, thus retaining most of the nutrients and live enzymes that are part of Mother Nature's design.

The benefit, as one analyst puts it, is simply that cold-pressing pushes "almost every drop ... out of the fiber, producing a drink dense with hue, tang and nutrients".

The downside is manufacturing challenges like shorter shelf life and food safety issues; raw, unpasteurised fruit / veg juices may be a nutrient goldmine, but they can also be a breeding ground for pathogens.

These concerns have prompted the usage by some manufacturers of (very) expensive High Pressure Processing (HPP) technology. HPP involves submerging the bottled juices

**Cold-pressed juices offer time-thirsty consumers a deliciously fresh way to drench their bodies in key nutrients. And health-aware buyers are snapping up these trendy beverages. Could this be the next craft beer? F&BR investigates.**

# Drink your salad

Fiona Stander ... "I didn't choose juicing. Juicing chose me ..."

in cold water under massive pressure which eliminates pathogens and increases typical shelf life of 3-5 days to a significantly longer 30-45 days.

Woolworths introduced its cold-pressed fruit and vegetable juice range in September 2015, the first South African retailer to offer a juice using the HPP process.

The company says that using HPP prevents spoilage without altering the taste, colour and texture of the fruits and vegetables.

The range has been catalogued to 262 of out 310 stores, Woolworths says, and customer response has been "very positive and exciting".

But just how likely is it that these premium juices will conquer South Africa the way premium coffees have done?

What sets these products apart is a new way and wave of raw juicing that harks back to ancient wisdom about food as medicine, and the slow process of cold-pressing - with or without HPP.

It fits perfectly with the lucrative and growing global health and wellness trend, something Stellenbosch cold-pressed juice pioneer Fiona Stander has personally experienced.

Stander is owner of the aptly-named Juice Revolution, a business she started in 2012. "I didn't choose juicing. Juicing chose me," she says.

Her husband came home in 2012 and announced he was going to do a juice cleanse. At first, she wasn't very happy with the idea of living on fruit and veg for a week, but decided to join in and support him. A week later, Stander says,

she "felt amazing". "We had tried other ways to improve our lifestyle and get healthier but nothing compares to the honesty and purity of raw juice."

Stander threw herself headlong into learning about the world of juicing and quickly realised a gap in the market: home delivery of cold-pressed juices was not available anywhere in South Africa.

She enrolled in an internationally-recognised natural juice therapy programme and used her extensive business experience gained locally and abroad to develop a sustainable model for a raw juice business.

She set off what has become a real cold-pressed juice revolution in South Africa.

The Juice Revolution uses two

juicers, an all stainless-steel twin gear, twin auger commercial Angel Juicer which turns at a leisurely 82 rpm and which, she says, is widely considered to be one of the best enzyme juicers on the market worldwide. The other is an all-stainless steel hydraulic cold-press juicer with an integrated shredder which cuts the fibres of the produce down to almost cellular level and the juice is then expressed using 14 tons of hydraulic pressure.

Both extraction processes result, says Stander, in an extremely high quality juice with more vitamins, minerals and enzymes intact due to very little friction and oxidation.

Stander, concerned that once made, cold-pressed juice starts losing its nutritional value quickly, and that there are vast differences in the shelf life

and nutritional value of various juices, then invested in a blast freezer which, she says, locks in all the flavours and nutrients until the consumer decides to open the bottle.

She uses a single-load blast freezer with a large capacity that was specially designed and built in 2014. She is able to produce 800 bottles frozen to -30C less than two hours after bottling. Stander calls her juices "fresh frozen".

Apart from advantages such as a higher quality, better tasting product, blast freezing offers health and

safety benefits. Stander says the extreme temperature dramatically slows down metabolic activity. "This means bacteria growth is slowed and there is a greatly reduced risk of contamination provided food is handled safely and subjected to freezing immediately after preparation."

Stander also refers to her products as "lovingly hand-made".

"There is personal care and attention paid in every step of our process, from sourcing to washing, shredding, pressing, blending, capping, labelling and freezing."

Raw juicing is very much part of the new economy and almost half of Stander's customers order online from all over SA. She couriers the juices packed in dry ice. For the rest, she has a juice bar in Stellenbosch and supplies selected Spar stores and several independent retailers, most of them in the Western Cape

Another innovator in cold-pressed juices in SA is Antonia De Luca, who studied at Stellenbosch and at Bond University in Australia, and has degrees in marketing and entrepreneurship as well as an MBA in finance.

She was brought up vegetarian from the age of 12, and became a vegan five years later. After traveling to the USA

**“ Nothing compares to the honesty and purity of raw juice ”**

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De Luca ... juicing is cleansing

## Cold-pressed = hot trend

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where she studied nutrition and health, and visited raw food restaurants for inspiration, De Luca opened Leafy Greens Café next door to the family's landmark Casalinga restaurant in Muldersdrift.

Cold-pressed juices have always been on the menu at Leafy Greens, as well as the family's two other restaurants, and De Luca is happy to supply in bulk to other restaurants.

At Leafy Greens, De Luca says she is able to offer cold-pressed "living" juices for the same price as regular fruit juices served in conventional restaurants. "When you know how to buy fruit and veg properly, you can keep prices low."

Last year she shipped in a high-end,

high volume cold pressed juicer from the USA that has no fast-turning gears and thus generates no heat in the juicing process. All fruit and veg are first washed in ozone which keeps them - and the juices - fresher for longer.

De Luca says she sources organic produce whenever possible but makes the salient point that even with best will in the world, "it's impossible to get everything organic".

What sets her apart is that many of the fruits and veggies, especially the "powerhouse" greens such as kale and brocolli, are picked from the extensive organic garden on the property and juiced the same day. Customers need to collect their juices from Leafy Greens at this stage as she does not have a cold-chain distribution network set up yet, but it's "in the pipeline".

In October last year De Luca started offering an innovative range of cold-pressed juices for cleansing and detoxifying, specially formulated to prevent

"flavour exhaustion". They're sold under her bright new brand, Antonia's. Nutrient loss is kept to a minimum by careful cold-pressing, says De Luca. Also, the bottles are filled virtually to the top so there is very little headspace, which limits oxygen and thus oxidation.

"None of us is on perfect diets," she says, "and most people don't eat enough - or any - of the leafy greens and vegetables they should be eating."

The juices are specially formulated to be taken at different times of the day, beginning with sweeter, green juices that contain protein to start the day. The last juice of the day is a savoury blend, much like a gazpacho, she says.

De Luca also produces cold-pressed nut milks.

Passionate entrepreneurs like De Luca and Stander are helping to reinvent - perhaps even revolutionise - the tired old fruit juice category with its unfashionably high sugar content. Their raw juices, like craft beers, are becoming an attractive beverage niche to be reckoned with.▲

