

Meet Australia's Best Producers

President's Medal Winner: Gary Rodely, Owner, Tathra Oysters, Southern NSW Coast



Gary Rodely (on the left) with his son Sam Rodely (right)

"Running an oyster farm on the Australian coast is a dream come true."

When my wife Jo and I bought our oyster farm on the coast of New South Wales it was very run-down and neglected, but over the years new technology and materials have revolutionised the industry in Australia. One of our big breakthroughs in business was when the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW started to recognise oysters and the importance of aquaculture through their Sydney Royal Fine Food Show in 2001. We supported it from the start. We've never missed an opportunity to submit entries and have been fortunate to have won a lovely string of awards. We have dedicated a lifetime to our work and now our son Sam, who graduated as a marine scientist from Wollongong University, is our farm manager.

Our lives are different to other people's. When we're working it's seven days a week, usually for nine months of the year. When the water is warm and the oysters are growing, we give our all. Then we have three months off to recuperate and travel, but it's always on our minds. We went to France last year and one of the first things we did was visit the oyster bars.

I firmly believe that the Sydney rock oyster is the best in the world. It's a slow-growing mollusc that requires dedication – they take around four or five years to produce. Farming is a high-risk business, and oyster farming is like any other type of farming in that you're dealing with droughts, pests and floods.

We've been involved with the Sydney Royal Easter Show since 2001 and we are very proud of our remarkable run of firsts. In 2002, we won the first ever gold medal for oysters, and in 2004 we received the first award for outstanding excellence. We were absolutely delighted to win the President's Medal in 2006 when the award was introduced – it's the highest accolade you can



achieve at the Sydney Royal Show. Then, in 2016 we received the first ever champion of aquaculture. These amazing accolades have put us on the menu in many of Australia's high profile restaurants.

Meeting international delegates at the Show is a great opportunity for us to demonstrate what we produce. The Sydney rock oyster is well known in Australia but it's a big secret overseas, so anything we can do to give this product exposure is wonderful.

For more information, or to register your interest in meeting other Australian producers such as Gary, please visit:

<http://www.rasnw.com.au/sydney-royal-competitions/competitions/cattle/general-information/international-delegate-program/>