

market need that we have discovered."

And that market need has only become more apparent during Bayles' time harvesting lavender.

"It's gone from literally zero to a sell-out of last year's supply," she said, adding that she plans to plant even more.

After the hectic time of harvest, Bayliss Ranch then reduces the lavender into two distinct forms via a distillation process, the essential oil and the hydroflorates, which is the condensation from the distilling process, gathered and collected.

"We have large totes that carry the waters off on trucks to

## *Aromatherapy is expanding itself by the personal experiences that people are having with pure lavender*

their point of destination at a company," she said, adding that just processing the raw materials is work enough—Bayliss Ranch has not seriously pursued selling finished products.

"We have a few products," she said. "We have a body moisturizer, the essential oil, a spritz, mouthwashes and shampoos. But I'm hoping not to expand (into retail) because it really is an effort to bring a consistent and reliable raw ingredient to the industry, and for me that is very focused. Taking it to that last (retail) step is a little bit fragmenting to me. With time, as things become more automated, yes. But we're learning this as we go. Five years ago, there weren't even any books in English telling us how to do this."

For those few products, Bayliss Ranch has a web site, [www.bayliss-ranch.com](http://www.bayliss-ranch.com) and also sells locally through S&S Produce and Made in Chico, among others.

Bayles said that the bulk of her oils and waters are sold domestically, much to "some major companies," whose names are familiar, but whom she doesn't want to state. Suffice it to say that Bayliss Ranch lavender ends up in a wide variety of cosmetic products, as well as in the ever-expanding market for aromatherapy.

"Aromatherapy is only expanding and validating itself by the personal experiences that people are having with pure, unadulterated botanicals," Bayles said. She also said that she's seen the essential oil of lavender heal burns, bruises and injuries, much like when it was used in place of alcohol in the Civil War. Yet, since these properties have not been validated to the studies of conventional medicine, she can neither make these claims on her labeling, and much like many other herbal remedies, these properties of lavender will have to be learned by word-of-mouth.

That word-of-mouth seems to be growing, if the survival of Bayliss Ranch is any indication. Years after taking over her husband's business as a complete novice, Bayles said that, "We've survived and grown. So I consider it a success. And I haven't received any other upsetting letters."

Bayliss Ranch can be reached via e-mail at [info@bayliss-ranch.com](mailto:info@bayliss-ranch.com).



# Lavender Dreams

**O**n Highway 99 just outside of Biggs proper, the traditional crops of rice and walnuts give way to a purplish sea. Captivating sights and smells combine to form Bayliss Ranch, the 134-year-old farm of the Bayles family.

This generation of Bayles' has offered fourth-generation Butte Countian, Donna, and her son, Dan, as the latest stewards of the land—with a decidedly different approach from previous generations.

The Bayles' raise a little rice on their "few thousand acres," down from the original 20,000-acre parcel. Also a little of the traditional walnuts that previous generations raised. Dan also raises livestock and trains horses. But, in the main, if you were to ask around, you'd discover that Bayliss Ranch is defined by one crop—California Certified Organic Lavender.

Donna Bayles didn't ask for this, incidentally. While her late husband and son were minding the land, she cultivated another career field as a lobbyist in Washington DC.

"I loved the electricity of that work as a lobbyist," she said. "I ended up having

It was stunning. I was startled and taken aback, without fully realizing how adamant people could be about organic growing, when I thought I was being a good steward to the environment."

Part of the problem, Bayles said, is that organic farming doesn't just effect the farmer choosing to raise crops that way. Because of the stringent certification process, "if they spray pesticides on a windy day, and it lands on my fields, it invalidates my certification," she said. "So it does cause

the user in their essential oil and in the blossoms themselves."

"We haven't had a problem in quite a while," she said. "We did have oak root fungus, and if you get that, there is no (organic) solution that I am aware of, so we did lose plants. Then you have regulations and annual inspections. Then you need to do an intense amount of paperwork to verify and comply with those regulations and have a good, strong paper trail to validate it."

Though after many years, her decision to switch to lavender has seemed to have paid off, Bayles said that she and other U.S. Certified Organic farmers are facing yet another challenge—the inequity of the organic label when applied to crops grown outside the country.

"One of the concerns that I am seeing is certified organic labels being put on products that are being grown in Third World countries," she said. "There's no way to regulate it. There are countries that don't have a certifier in their field for five years. I have one every year, if not twice a year. These

people get the same labeling as we do, but



them extra caution. But that is something organic farmers have to deal with."

