

Do the monster mash

The chips were down for ugly potatoes, but a gem of an idea has saved them from the bin



I THINK SHE'S BEAUTIFUL

IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER: Potatoes Australia boss Robbie Davis with an "ugly" potato, and, left, Mr Potato-Head.

Picture: TAIT SCHMAAL

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RURAL EDITOR

UGLY potatoes rejected by fussy shoppers are the new cream of the crop, after fed-up SA farmers devised a way to use the huge volume of vegetables that fail to reach supermarket shelves.

A puree that uses all the ugly potatoes, peel and all, is primed to launch on the food market after a collaboration between Potatoes South Aus-

tralia and Adelaide University. The university's food innovation industry projects manager, Dr John Carragher, said they had been running trials using the puree to make meat pies, as a gluten-free ingredient in bread and crackers.

"We've made chocolate mousse and sorbet," he said. "Now if we had a customer who wanted a tonne of potato puree a week, we would be absolutely delighted."

South Australia produces

80 per cent of the nation's potatoes and industry body chief executive Robbie Davis has spent several years researching ways to slash the corresponding waste.

She was named the state's Rural Woman of the Year in 2016 and used the winning proceeds to embarking on an international project to explore ideas.

"Twenty to 40 per cent of our potatoes are now not making the supermarket shelves,

they are lost from the value chain, either worth nothing per tonne if they are thrown away or about \$10 a tonne for stockfeed," Ms Davis said.

This compares to farmers getting \$300-\$400 a tonne for potatoes sold into supermarkets. Ms Davis said farmers were hamstrung by tight requirements for the vegetables to be a highly specific size, shape and colour.

This is the latest project Potatoes SA has undertaken with

Adelaide University at Waite Institute. It first targeted consumers to find out what they thought about the nutritional quality of potatoes.

The groups had also worked on finding ways to increase the vegetable's shelf life and to reduce waste in the supply chain.

The newly created potato puree can last up to 10 months in the fridge. Ms Davis said it gave potato growers a key selling point in pursuing new international and domestic ex-

port markets to process some of the estimated 80,000 tonnes of potatoes that currently don't make it onto supermarket shelves. A new company established by the association called Puree Australia was now ready to start selling the long life potato puree.

"We have a social and economic responsibility to change this," Ms Davis said.

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