

Garage Project goes Circular with Mashbone for Dogs

<http://pureadvantage.org/news/2017/10/05/garage-project-strategy-worth-noting/>

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Now I know that a good many of you will be familiar (perhaps too familiar!) with Wellington brewery [Garage Project's](#) appetising range of beers, but were you aware that they've branched out into delectable treats for dogs as well? 'Now why would a brewery start catering to pets?' I hear you ask - and that's a good question because, as a rule, companies who specialise in one form of product, generally don't tend to move into unknown territory. It can be risky, a distraction and it often involves product development in an area that is completely unfamiliar. However, Garage Project has proven that - if done properly - it can, indeed work well.

Garage Project is a small brewery that, as part of its brewing process, produces malted barley (or mash). As good corporate citizens, the company has been distributing its leftover barley to a local community garden to be used as compost and provided farmers with the balance as feed. This arrangement works well but, being a company that likes to push boundaries (they are, after all located in an old petrol station in the Aro Valley), Garage Project thought that there were unexplored opportunities that could be capitalised on with their malted barley by-product. Oh, and the company is heavily represented by brew dogs and dog lovers and that's where we come in.



Garage Project representatives met with the [Bioresource Processing Alliance \(BPA\)](#) and outlined their interest in creating nutritious treats for dogs based on their barley secondary stream. Pet 'treats' are generally regarded as food that should be given to animals on a limited basis, however, Garage Project knew how much goodness was in the spent mash but needed someone with expertise in animal nutrition to help them develop a product that was both palatable *and* balanced.

BPA food technologists and veterinary scientists from [AgResearch](#) and [Massey University](#) combined forces to invent and refine a recipe, using the mash, combined with grass-fed beef and free-range eggs. Garage Project also teamed up with Wellington's [Rosa Foods](#) to manufacture the product and [Mashbone Brewery Bites](#) for our canine friends is the result. The brewing process involves lightly crushing the grain and mixing with hot water to extract the sugars for the beer. What remains is spent barley, with the sugar extracted, leaving a high protein, high fibre energy source - a highly valuable raw material. The *Mashbone Brewery Bites* resemble gourmet crackers and with some slick branding and clever marketing, the product is proving to be a winner with dogs who hound their owners to bring them back some whenever they are picking up their favourite six-pack of beer.

It's one thing for a company to believe that their product concept will be healthy and liked by end users but it is smart business practice to bring in some extra support if you don't have the skills in-house to *prove* that this is actually true. Projects involving appropriate external experts and producers who are innovative, with a flair for managing resources will have a good chance of success due to the willingness to collaborate, a whole systems mindset and integrated thinking by both parties. It's a useful marketing tool to have a product innovation backed up by experts who are independent and qualified in the specific area you are stepping into. Rosa Foods made the *Bites* look appealing in the package, while the scientists at Massey and AgResearch were able to conduct nutrition analyses, palatability trials and hone the recipe to cater to the canine preference. The *Brewery Bites* are apparently delectable *and* they provide supplementary benefits for dogs' bones and joints. Demonstrating this to customers would have proved difficult had Garage Project not involved scientists and an experienced manufacturer - clearly advantageous as sales escalate.



Garage Project is focused on the circular economy, managing waste to value in the full life cycle of their products and creating sustainable and natural offerings without preservatives and fillers. The effort is a worthy cause that's obviously a winner with customers since the company ranked [Fastest growing manufacturer in Deloitte's Fast 50 in 2015](#). It's another advantageous policy to use a 'clean labelling' approach (using wholesome ingredients, no artificial ingredients, allergens, etc) as this is something consumers are crying out for - and for their pets. But it pushes a product *further* up the value chain if the ingredients are also premium and locally sourced, organic or free-range. Combining these benefits with recommendations from credible experts and a narrative around whole-of-life-cycle merchandise and a product often soars to the 'top shelf' of product land.

The *Mashbone Brewery Bites* are currently sold in liquor stores, Commonsense Organics, Farro Fresh, certain New World supermarkets, veterinary clinics, grooming sites, 4 Squares and Fresh Choice. Moreover Garage Project is looking to launch into the US and Australian markets as likely next steps - a bold and sensible move and one that will surely pay off as the trend for high quality pet foods has skyrocketed internationally.

For a company that is crystal clear in its marketing and as on point as Garage Project is with beer, it could have been tempting to think that they could go it alone in the development of a product so far removed from their core business but that's what makes Garage Project successful. To know when to bring in expert partners who can help grasp the benefits of why this is important to a company's long term vision is key. I'm neither a beer drinker nor a dog owner but I have to admire the company's ability to go into uncharted territory and see it pay off but for now, I'll watch with interest for the next product innovations coming out of Garage Project.