

Garage Project - A beer for you, beer biscuits for your dog



As its business grew, Wellington based brewery, Garage Project developed a one-tonne a day problem - spent grain. With the sugars extracted to be fermented into alcohol, what is left is a high protein, high fibre by-product of the brewing process. While local farmers loved the stuff and happily took it away to use as feed for their stock, it was a cost to the business.

One day, Garage Project's Jos Ruffell, whose husky/Labrador cross dogs are part of the Aro St brewery family, asked why the grain couldn't be put to better use – in a dog biscuit for example.

Garage Project Business Manager, Jason Crowe takes over the story.

“We wanted to create something like our beers –unique, premium and tasty to dogs. Instead of just adding a standard ingredient like peanut butter to the spent grain, we went for pure New Zealand ingredients – so we worked with a local chef on the recipe and added things like; premium NZ bovine bone powder, NZ bovine liver powder and green shell mussel powder extracts from one of NZ's top suppliers. These ingredients were shown to contribute to bone and joint health on dogs, as well as be very tasty!

“After about a year selling through our brewery shop we knew we had a product and a market and we decided to properly commercialise it.”

Jason heard about FoodPilot from Sally Gallagher, the regional Business Development Manager for the New Zealand Food Innovation Network (NZFIN). Sally also connected Jason to the Bioresource Processing Alliance, who subsequently co-funded the FoodPilot project. The Garage Project approached FoodPilot looking for nutritional analysis, recipe refinement and packaging advice, but after a visit to Massey and a series of conversations, agreed a much more in-depth project with The FoodPilot team.

Jason says he and FoodPilot worked hard to crystallise the objectives of the project – to ensure the biscuits were palatable and healthy for dogs, that they had a repeatable production method, defined shelf life and packaging options. He also kept in close contact with the team at different stages of the project and visited a number of times to ensure the project goals were still relevant and were being achieved, to tweak the plan and make decisions as to next steps.

Today 100g packets of 'Mashbone' biscuits are on shelves at a handful of pet stores, vet clinics and doggy daycares throughout the Wellington region, and plans are afoot for further rollout. The project has enabled Garage Project to access food technology and veterinary expertise via Massey University and the FoodPilot that were essential to the successful development of the product, and enabled turning a cost centre in its business into a profit generator.

“Our customers get it and they like it - a beer for you and nutritious beer

<https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/colleges/college-of-health/institute-food-nutrition-human-health/foodpilot/food-projects.cfm>