

Meet Kabuto Noodles: the 'Posh Pot Noodle' getting slurped up on TikTok

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Crispin Busk, Founder of Kabuto Noodles about European expansion, the power of TikTok and always keeping the business planet-friendly.

What was the catalyst for launching Kabuto Noodles?

I was working for other people in the food space, (I was in sales for Pieminister, a massive success story) and saw a gap for a premium instant noodle and went for it. I started to feel like something was missing from our supermarket shelves and I waited patiently for a super premium, almost luxury feeling instant noodle to pop up. But it didn't, so I thought come on, you can have a crack at it! I guess ultimately you could say I was already working in food, and saw a gap in the market.

Tell me about the business – what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work

with, how you reach customers and so on?

Kabuto makes upmarket instant noodles. When we launched, we were the first premium instant noodle, before that noodles were much cheaper and didn't source the quality ingredients that we do. We wanted to launch a 'Posh Pot Noodle' or a Wagamama in a pot for a foodie audience who wanted convenience without compromising on taste. We now work with some of the biggest supermarkets in the country such as Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose and we're exporting overseas: we're seeing lots of traction in Denmark, France, Dubai and more. We initially started reaching our customers via traditional routes such as print advertising, however as the marketing landscape has evolved so have we. Our most successful platform at the moment is TikTok: we've recently reached over 4 million consumers with one piece of content.

How has the business evolved since its launch? When was this?

We launched in 2010 – it feels both really recent and ages ago. For the first couple of years I worked solo and now we've grown to a team of 7. The roles and responsibilities have grown and adapted as the market has. We're now focusing much more on the sustainability of the business and recently became B Corp certified, a moment we were all very proud of and worked hard for. Our pots are fully recyclable now – we were the first in our category to achieve this. We're also diversifying the business and have expanded to a range of instant Mac N'Cheese: this was a retro feeling food that we felt was in dire need of a revamp – the response so far has been fantastic! We've also gone fully Veggie – the UK has embraced flexitarian lifestyles with so much enthusiasm and so have we.

Tell us about the working culture at Kabuto Noodles

We believe in having a fairly relaxed working culture, we have a strong work life balance, but believe that you can create great stuff whilst treating people well.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

We supplied the USA for a while. Initially it looked very encouraging however, the US had much longer supply chains than here the UK and took up a huge amount of energy and cash. It felt as though there was a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow but was much harder to get at than we thought. I'm glad we gave it a go and it was a massive learning curve, but we've realised our sweet spot is here and in Europe and we're investing our spend and time here. Still love the States though!

How does Kabuto Noodles answer an unmet need?

The world of food has the unmet need of people being hungry! We offer a good quality, great value range of products that will fill you up when you're hungry. We're busier than ever and more time pressed than ever and we're catering to those that want quick, easy, taste and fun foods, without the worry of excess salt or fat.

What's in store for the future?

We've got a very aggressive - in the best possible sense - New Product Development Strategy, headed up by our very hungry and foody team! We want to continue to supply new markets. We want to continue to ensure we hit our environmental goals and grow Kabuto in the most planet-friendly way in which we can.

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

Plan, plan, plan! If 80 - 90% of businesses fail in the first year because of cash flow, make sure that's not you. Although we did take loans in the beginning, we paid them back as soon as we could and a huge part of our business since has been making sure cash flow is healthy. It takes the weight off a little. Oh, and I also believe that if you feel an idea is right, just go for it. We gave the US a go, it wasn't right, we moved on and did something else that was. One door closed and another opened.

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

I love health and fitness and I love trying new things, and I'm a sucker for the latest fad. The routines I have stuck by though over the years are pretty basic: get up early, get some sunshine in your eyes, and exercise. Feeling healthy and having a daily dose of Vitamin D gives me the best chance of getting stuff done. Sometimes the simplest things are the most impactful.

Crispin Busk is the founder of *Kabuto Noodles*.

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