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With a love of adventure and a passion for flavour born from fire, Ozpig is celebrating 15 years since they brought their first design to the Gympie Muster in 2006. To mark this milestone, managing director, Anthony Shepherd, chats with Ben and Lauren on this week's episode of the Snowys Camping Show.

Anthony shares the journey of the Ozpig brand, and together the three of them dive into the nitty-gritty of how they built the first prototype. They talk about how it's evolved over the years, how their customers influence their brand, the challenges of manufacturing and quality control, and what's in store for the future – so check it out below for all the details.

## **Timestamps:**

- 00:00 – Intro
- 03:12 – Building the prototype of the Ozpig
- 06:02 – Why did you choose a gas bottle?
- 09:36 – Challenges with the design
- 14:10 – Ozpig Lovers Facebook group
- 17:47 – Customer stories that stand out
- 19:48 – Offshore vs Australian manufacturing
- 23:55 – Quality control
- 29:38 – Testing process for the Ozpig
- 31:57 – Caring for your Ozpig
- 33:37 – What's in Ozpig's future?
- 34:37 – What is your favourite memory of the Ozpig?

## **Links to things mentioned in this episode:**

- [Ozpig Cooker Series 2](#)
- [Ozpig Smoker](#)
- [Ozpig Big Pig](#)
- [Spices](#)
- [Ozpig Accessories](#)



## **Origins of the brand**

Established 15 years ago by Anthony's parents, Ozpig is a family business that has come a long way since its inaugural appearance at the Gympie Muster. Anthony is a boilermaker by trade, so he brings his background and previous experience working with steel to the company.

Their invention came about during a 6-month trip along the River Murray. Allan and Assunta Shepherd had just retired and built their own caravan for the adventure. On this trip, they discovered that you weren't allowed to have a fire on the ground. As they were country kids from Mt Isa, fire and cooking were what they loved to do, so the idea for creating a safe and contained fire off the ground was born.

## **Inspiration for the product & manufacturing**

Like any good invention, they built the Ozpig for themselves and continued to travel with it. Everywhere they went, other campers were interested in their product so using their friendship network around the country, and Allan Shepherd's jack-of-all-trades skills, they used a 9kg gas bottle and fine-tuned it to create the original prototype. After many variations and adjustments, the Ozpig was born, with a name inspired by the animal itself.

Like any business owner, they had hopes that they were onto something special, but it was only ever supposed to be petrol money for their retirement. They travelled all around Australia for the caravan and camping shows, and then the brand just grew from there. Now their retail networks are over 300 in Australia and they distribute in NZ, Japan, UK, and Europe.

## **Challenges of product design**

One of the challenges was creating the accessory line as it can be complicated to make sure they all work together with the Ozpig cooker to create the ultimate cooking station.

The actual Ozpig has not changed that much, but the base of the chimney on the Series 2 cooker has been updated, and the Series 2 also has had some other accessory additions. The mesh door is an add-on that allows you the chance to use the unit in places such as national parks. The Big Pig, a more recent addition to their range, is a passion project that took 6 years to develop before it was released onto the market. The design considered lots of customer feedback to create a larger heater and cooker for keeping warm in cold weather outdoors.

## **Stories customers have shared about their Ozpigs**

There are so many stories of Ozpigs that stand out, but one customer told them recently that his wife gave him an Ozpig 8 years ago and it has been absolutely everywhere with him from Alice Springs down to South Australia, to all over the east coast and west coast - and it's still going strong! For him, it's the best present that he's ever had. Experiences like that help the Ozpig team get up every day to keep pushing what they're doing, hold their values strong, build a quality product, and continue to deliver on their promises to customers.



## Ozpig Lovers Facebook group & connecting with customers

This group was created by customers, and the brand has always been a part of it. It's a place for Ozpig lovers to share and learn from each other, not to hear from just the brand. They do have to monitor it, but the focus is on the customers getting together to showcase their cooking and supporting others who are new to using their Ozpigs.

They've seen a shift in customers using their products at home, so it's no longer just for campers. A lot of people like to leave it set up on the back patio for cooking or to simply sit around enjoying the fire. Seeing the evolution of how the Ozpig is used, gives the brand direction for where they need to take their product range.



*Ozpig celebrates its 15th anniversary this year. Image: Ozpig*

## Quality testing & maintenance

They're not bulletproof, and like any product, there is a weak point but they are tested and tortured to make sure they don't buckle under extreme heat. The original ones are still kicking around Australia 15 years later so just like any product, if you look after it and it's built well, it will last.

Once it's holding temperature and it's warm enough to touch, get some canola oil on some paper towel and rub it on the surface gently to keep it in condition. The more often you use it, the better it will last as when it's left sitting around it's more likely to be exposed to the elements.



## **Perspective on overseas vs Australian manufacturing**

There's a time and place for Australian and overseas manufacturing, and it's complicated. If Ozpig were to manufacture their products in Australia, it would significantly increase their cost. Driving the price up more than \$600!

They could potentially make it here and sell it directly to the customer, but that would cut out the retail network, so the effect of that on independent businesses needs to be considered too. Creating a product that's commercially viable and high quality so that the average person can enjoy it is really important, but so is supporting the independent retailers that provide local Aussie jobs.

Prior to COVID, 90% of products in the Ozpig range had Anthony's fingerprints on them as he was directly part of the quality control process. Ozpig as a brand does not just slap its name on something. Instead, they take the time to make sure it meets their high standard. When other manufacturers hop on board and take advantage of a trend, or aim to be the cheapest in the marketplace, it makes it difficult for smaller family brands to produce good products. People have the perception that offshore is poorer quality, but that comes down to the brand and its values. Some brands are focused only on making increasing their profit margin, which makes the product and consumer experience suffer. At the end of the day, it's about what the brand wants to offer their customer, especially in regards to quality and consistency. Building good relationships in the manufacturing process and not being afraid to get your hands dirty is important to Ozpig according to Anthony. Using a grinder to show people how to do it helps to create a deeper partnership so that everyone believes in what you're trying to do. Just showing up in a suit and tie and telling people what you want them to make at the cheapest price, is not what the Ozpig brand is about.

## **The future of Ozpig**

Over the last 12 months, they've been looking inwards to focus on who they are as a brand, and it's all about sitting around the fire, creating meals infused with the flavour that comes from fire, and sharing those moments with family and friends – so they're focusing on products that can help people enjoy the outdoors longer.

## **Favourite memories of the Ozpig**

Sadly, recent years have seen the passing of both Anthony's parents, but he tells us that there are so many special memories from times shared together as a family at tradeshows and at the Gympie Muster. The Ozpig brand was born at the Muster, and Anthony still takes his family there when he can.

## **Thanks for listening, tune in again for next week's episode!**

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If you have any questions for Ben and Lauren, make sure you head over to our [Facebook group](#) and let us know as we'd love to hear from you.

Catch you out there!