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AUSTRALIAN
BOTANICAL SOAP
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Raising the *bar*

Meet the father and son team taking sustainable, all-natural soap to new heights.

BY JIYAN DESSENS

When it comes to keeping clean, there's soap and then there's soap. Don't know the difference? Good soap doesn't just sanitise. It nourishes your skin with a wealth of all-natural ingredients, leaving you feeling refreshed – and smelling (so to speak) like a rose.

Melbourne father and Son team John and Scott Apperley are the founders behind a local brand that ticks all the boxes – Australian Botanical Soap. Together, they've tuned a once-basic personal care product into a skincare and hygiene essential that's in hot demand all over the world, from the UK, US and Europe to Korea, Japan, China and Taiwan.

But it wasn't always this way. John and Scott's journey started more than two decades ago, after a financial setback that would have broken lesser businessmen.

Back to the beginning

Speaking to the Connection, Scott remembers the sudden upheaval in their lives like it was yesterday. "It was midnight and I was working another 16-hour day, which wasn't uncommon on the chicken farm, but that was the last. I remember thinking, 'tomorrow, the banks take our farm.'"

It was the mid '90s and a mix of high interest rates and deregulation of the egg industry cost them everything they'd worked their lives to build up. But this setback sent John's entrepreneurial streak into overdrive. He looked at the tiny, coarse soap bars being sold by supermarket giants, and remembered the superior products he'd used as a boy.

"I described it as going back to the future," John explains. "Back in the 1940s and '50s, you just went to the corner grocer shop and if you wanted soap, they cut you a 200g block off a big bar. So, we created our own soap bars and the long process of building our brand began."

Based in nature

Key to John's idea of going 'back to the future' was a focus on the quality exemplified by the brands of his youth. At the time, many soap bars were made from tallow, which is a substance derived from animal fat – and by the early 2000s not much had changed.

"Dad saw a gap in the market for a soap bar with a more natural base," explains Scott. "We were the first company in Australia to use only sustainably sourced palm oil in our soap bar. We didn't want palm oil coming from just any plantation."



THE MEMBER-EXCLUSIVE 8-PACK CAN BE FOUND IN COSTCO WAREHOUSES AUSTRALIA-WIDE.



Another sticking point was lack of choice in fragrances, so John was determined to effect lasting change. Australian Botanical Soap led the charge by introducing a swathe of enticing scents. And the top fragrances are available at Costco in an exclusive eight-pack, giving members more bang for their buck. "We have a premium soap bar at an affordable price," says Scott, adding that Australian Botanical Soap is triple-milled, limiting water content and ensuring suds last longer. "You can buy one of ours and it will outlast three regular soap bars – so it's real value for money."

Pushing the boundaries

Ever focused on improvement, Scott and John are continually refining their product, striving for a soap bar that goes above and beyond the industry standard. When you use Australian Botanical Soap, you can rest assured that the soap base is free of artificial foaming agents SLS and SLES, as well as artificial preservatives.

"We want our soap bar to be as natural as it can be, so we've replaced ETDA and HEDP with a natural sugar-based preservative," says Scott. "We did a lot of testing to make sure we didn't lose any of the soap's quality. Our bars have a great rich lather that lasts for a long time and it comes from an all-natural soap base. This is a hard combination to achieve."

Even when it comes to fragrances, Australian Botanical Soap has gone out of its way to remove artificial nasties like propylene glycol, phthalates and parabens, giving customers piece of mind and superior results.

"We literally have done everything we can," says John. "There's nothing more that we could do to make sure our soap base is totally chemically free."

Together, they've built an incredibly successful, environmentally conscious brand up from nothing. The secret? According to John, it's simple: "You have to be determined," he says. "You have to be persistent. You just keep going – and you become stronger as a result." **C**

LOOK OUT FOR ...

Australian Botanical is currently developing an all-natural liquid soap, which will soon be available in Australian warehouses. As with all their products, John and Scott's liquid soap has been through rigorous quality control to meet their brand's high standards.

"We've got to make sure whatever we present to the market is top quality," says Scott. "We intend to have a range of items out there going forward, but we'll be testing and testing again before it comes out. Because we've got a quality product to uphold."

