



Proudly made in Porirua

Words JULES SMITH Photos WILLIAM DAVENPORT

IdealCup www.idealcup.co.nz

Reduce, reuse and recycle is the mantra of the environmentally conscious business and, increasingly, consumer. When it comes to the usability of the new eco-friendly, reusable takeaway coffee cup IdealCup, you could add 'rinse and repeat' to the list. That's how easy it is to get into the swing of a reusable coffee cup instead of the disposable takeaway variety on a one-way trip to the local landfill.

Wellington is arguably the coffee capital of the world and the upshot of the 'daily shot' is that thousands of takeaway cups are chucked away everyday. It doesn't have to be like this, so thought the Nicks – Nick Fry and Nick Down – fire service stalwarts by day (and night), reusable coffee cup creators in any other spare minute they may happen to have.

To call the Nicks passionate is an understatement. They are borderline obsessed with their IdealCup innovation, with being ecologically and sustainably sound, with using local resources and talent, with walking the talk.

They are proud, and rightly so, of a locally produced product that they believe knocks the socks of imported competition. They have tapped into local knowledge and talent to tackle the ultimate modern goal: reducing the carbon footprint of our daily pleasures.

The IdealCup is fully reusable and recyclable. It is made

locally from materials that can be recycled locally. It has a lifetime guarantee. It also looks not a million miles away from your familiar takeaway cup... you could call that the comfort factor. It keeps your drink hot, your hands cool and your conscience clear. With a lockable, leak-free lid it is also a lot easier to sling in the car cup holder than a paper version.

Great design and ease of use were paramount in the development of IdealCup, however it is not a case of style over substance. The fact that the cup is made from polypropylene, a number five recyclable plastic, and the lid and its rotating top plate from polyethylene, a number one recyclable plastic, is no accident. A three-year research and development process encompassing consumer trials, consultations with manufacturing plants and yet more research, were behind the decision to make the cups from these recyclable materials.

"There was nothing suitable on the market when we started thinking about this in 2007 and we thought it can't be that hard to produce something that would be reusable and ultimately easily recyclable," explains Nick Fry, who is also owner, along with wife Steph, of the carbon neutral Celcius Coffee company.

The Nicks are also involved in SweetGrounds a soil conditioner product using waste coffee grounds and produced by Celcius Coffee. Nick Down says after the success of SweetGrounds it was really about looking

at the total waste from a café and what could be done about it. "It was also about raising awareness of what being sustainable really means and helping people see what can be done to reduce the amount of waste produced."

Nick Fry explains: "In the early stages of development we imported a sample of melamine cups from China, put them out into a couple of businesses with the intention of gauging initial reactions and then working with a local designer to develop a prototype.

"Everyone loved the idea... so much so that they couldn't wait to get their hands on them and started purchasing a similar product coming out of Australia."

Despite the knowledge that they were entering a highly competitive market supplied by cheap imports, the Nicks remained committed to local materials and production. Melamine was quickly ruled out as a material and the two recyclable plastics emerged as the obvious choice. Thoughts turned to production, something that would be much cheaper to do in China but with that comes a loss of control. Finding a business in Porirua that could meet the IdealCup's exacting standards and turnaround has meant that the business owners retain control of their manufacturing tool and can keep a close eye on quality.

"We had a really strong idea of how we wanted the



cup to look, feel and perform and worked with our local designer and manufacturer to refine the details and make sure it was spot on," says Nick Fry. "It may look like a simple product but there is a huge amount of design that goes in to creating a product like this."

"We could, of course, have had it made in China a lot cheaper... but that would entail a lot more carbon miles!" points out Nick Down.

"We thought it would be great to have that local connection and increased control over the tool, which is our capital at the end of the day," adds Nick Fry. "Obviously we are biased, but we really believe this cup is better than the imported competition."

IdealCup has huge scope: for individuals, cafés, coffee companies, right through to larger New Zealand corporates. The cups can be customised in a range of Resene colours, branded with logos and used in a 'swap a cup' bond system with a local café or supplied to staff as part of a company's commitment to reducing its waste. Cups can be purchased on their own for use with biodegradable disposable lids, solving the issue some people have with keeping the lids clean.

"We also offer a bonding system where the cups are hand engraved with a unique number that can be personalised to the individual or business and they will always be able to track their cup," explains Nick Fry. "It



also supports the lifetime guarantee that we offer."

The cost benefits of reusable cups are obvious from all angles. "Cafés have to store boxes of takeaway cups at a cost of 35-50 cents each for a branded cup

that ends up in the bin. We sell the cups wholesale for around \$7 per unit for 1,000 units. They are then on-sold for around \$15 – making the money back for the business straightaway while also eliminating the need for storage. The customer comes in with their cup and could be offered a discount on their coffee, as they are not costing the café a disposable cup, so it's a win-win. The branding is there, the feel-good factor about not contributing to landfill is there and the savings are easy to see," explains Nick Down.

Says Nick Fry: "This business is not all about money for us, like SweetGrounds this is what we see as the future. We want to see a time where there are no takeaway cups going to landfill. This is not just a buzz word to us, it's a commitment to a sustainable future."

"It can be frustrating for us because we have got this belief in being clean and green, being New Zealand made and I think we would hope that people will support these values."

In an ideal world, we would all be drinking from an IdealCup.

For more information see www.idealcup.co.nz. Wholesale orders and enquiries can be made via info@idealcup.co.nz and the cups are available for retail purchase at Celcius Café, 130 Hutt Road, Petone and via the online shop at www.celciuscoffee.co.nz.