

Proper Foods  
Proper Crisps



Stuart Franklin (right), wife Kathryn and Larry Williamson

**Y**ou could say the writing was on the wall for Stuart Franklin. The head fryer of Proper Crisps, who hails from north-east England, became the crisp monitor at school when he was seven years old, hawking crisps around the other kids just before playtime.

“Yes, the die was cast,” says Stuart. At first they were 7p a bag and he knew his 7 times table backwards, but initially he ran into a bit of trouble when they went up to 8p.

Both Stuart and his wife, Kathryn – the tater technician – worked in food before coming out to settle in New Zealand, she as a food technologist and he in sales and marketing of food. They hadn’t been here long before they started asking themselves why, when New Zealand grows some of the best potatoes in the world, could they not buy really great crisps.

They embarked on a global research trip, bought an old-fashioned crisp kettle in the US and set up their equipment in Upper Moutere with the help of Kathryn’s dad, a retired Rolls-Royce aero engineer. After some experimentation, they hit on a crisp they were happy with.

They use potatoes from Canterbury (the variety varying according to the season and named on the bag), sunflower oil and sea salt from Lake Grassmere in Marlborough. Simple as that. A hands-on business, while the potatoes are frying, they’re stirred with a stainless steel rake – a duty shared between Stuart and Larry, the fixer.

The judges found the crisps delicious and not overly salty, and were impressed with the simplicity and real nature of the ingredients.

And Stuart’s favourite accompaniment for the only handmade crisps in Australasia? “One of Nelson’s craft beers, of course.”

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