



**MILESTONE:** Renae Bunster's flagship hot sauce listed on the US Amazon website a few weeks ago. Photo: Attila Csaszar

# Crowdfunding, saucy branding add spice to Bunsters exports

A distinctive recipe, creative product name and a viral crowdfunding campaign have been the key ingredients of success for a local hot sauce business.

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SIX years ago, while sunning herself on a beach in Mexico, Renae Bunster came up with a recipe for hot sauce inspired by the tastes of Central America she had encountered during a year of backpacking.

As inspired as she felt, Ms Bunster wrote it off as one of those perfect travel moments, when the

world is your oyster and creative ideas percolate freely.

Back in Perth a year later and on the way to reviving her career as a television journalist, Ms Bunster recalled her hot sauce inspiration and decided to brew up a batch for some friends.

They loved it, and encouraged her to produce more.

Whether it was the orange juice, goji berries, coconut sugar

or Himalayan pink salt (among other ingredients) that made the sauce so appealing, Ms Bunster soon had to upgrade her eight-litre pot to a 30L version, just to keep up with demand for the 150ml bottles, which sold for \$15 each.

When she sold almost 1,000 bottles and took home \$12,000 in one weekend at the Perth Chilli Festival in 2013, Ms Bunster knew that she was on to something.

Clever branding for her signature sauce by way of an artfully employed expletive in the name helped drive recognition of the product, which went viral on social media.

The business, called Bunsters, now has more than 200 independent stockists across Australia, a US Food and Drug Administration import approval, and just weeks ago secured a listing on the US

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Amazon website – reportedly the first for an Australian chilli sauce company.

“It started from my kitchen table and ever since I’ve reinvested the money into bottles, ingredients and creating larger batches,” Ms Bunster told *Business News*.

“The hot sauce industry has traditionally been male dominated, competing with each other to make a hotter, saltier and more vinegary sauce.

“No-one had thought to use coconut sugar because it’s got a low GI, or Himalayan pink salt because it’s full of minerals, which is what I did.

“People will say our sauce is pricey, but it’s worth it.”

In 2015, Ms Bunster launched a crowdfunding campaign on her own website, rather than conventional platforms, to upscale production, fund custom-made high-end bottles to match the premium ingredients, and kick start the business.

She surpassed her original \$65,000 target on the way to raising \$250,000, and the business has continued to use crowdfunding