

Flavour Creations introduces innovative dysphagia cup

Australian-based company Flavour Creations has introduced a Dysphagia Cup, designed to accommodate the needs of those suffering from swallowing disorders. The innovative new product's angled shape will allow clients to drink without needing to tilt their head back. Bernadette Eriksen, Founder and Managing Director of Flavour Creations tells Innova Market Insights: "This is a highly complex product that has to first and foremost take into account the feeding and swallowing difficulties our clients face every day. Above all else, this design's, along with the cup accessories (cup holder, lid) sole purpose is to empower the individual using it." There is a significant market for the cup, as according to Speech Pathology Australia: "Swallowing disorders (dysphagia) may affect as much as 22% of people aged 50 and over. This figure increases to 50% of people living in residential aged care facilities."

As a result, Flavour Creations has reportedly invested more than AUS\$6 million dollars into the research and development of the cup, adapting their manufacturing facilities to suit the production of their newest product. From introducing new packing equipment and overhauling conveyor systems to creating new seal detection units and updating quality systems to reflect the changes to the cup, Eriksen says: "The new cup has a significant impact on the process flow, its unique shape does not allow for flow through like a conventional round or square cup or bottle."

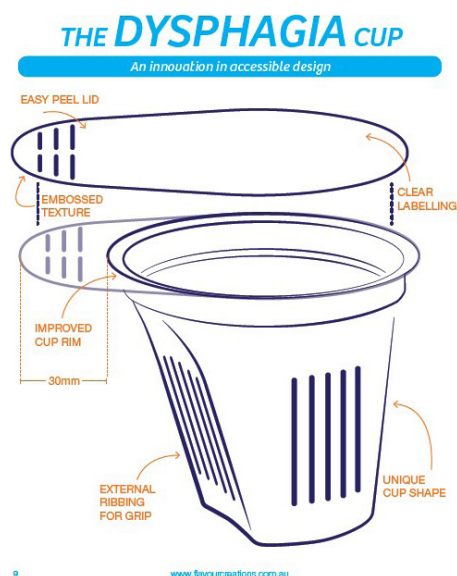
Flavour Creations states that the end-user and their accessibility was a constant consideration in designing the elements of the cup. Eriksen adds that the design had to take the age and demographic of the consumer into account, as well as "physical size, as our current aged population is much smaller. Therefore, the circumference of the cup needs to be of a size they can easily hold." Other medical conditions, such as arthritis, or physical disabilities also needed to be thought of. For amputees, for example, the cup has a cup holder. Eriksen states that they wanted to get: "as close to a one stop shop for anyone with any condition that would impair them from being able to bring a cup to their mouth and then ensure the contents flow correctly to enable a safe swallow."

The company explains that the resulting cup's features include a large easy-to-read foil label with external ribbing and embossed texture to assist with a manual grip. "These features combined make the cup easier to open and hold by people who are often physically impaired, allowing greater autonomy and restoring dignity in those who would often depend on carers to aid in even simple tasks – like drinking a glass of water."

Eriksen details the many considerations that went into the design and production of the cup: "With nearly 20 years in the industry and having the benefit of closely observing the people who actually need the cup, coupled with knowledge gained from research and working with Speech Pathologists and Occupational Therapists, I had a very strong idea of what I wanted to design." The unique shape meant that manufacturing and commercialization were one of the largest challenges. Eriksen lists the requirements, explaining that the design needed to be durable, balanced, stackable for transport, light weight, transparent, as "we eat with our eyes," and it had to "look 'cool' – not another clunky offering for those with disabilities." The materials had to be, among others, environmentally friendly, ethically sourced and cost effective.

As far as other developments in the works at Flavour Creations, Eriksen states: "There is a strong correlation between those with dysphagia and texture modified foods. Currently we are more focused on fortified textured modified foods that have real home cooked flavors and natural aromas." This is a complex area as Eriksen explains that the demand to use only real foods – additional butter, eggs, etc. to assist gain weight is increasing. However, many dysphagia sufferers simply cannot consume the amount of food they need. "There is a high proportion of malnutrition in the elderly, especially those living in the community – they are frail and have low appetites," she says. Eriksen's statement is supported by Speech Pathology Australia, which says: "If dysphagia is left untreated or not managed properly it may result in chest infection, malnutrition and dehydration, weight loss, and in serious cases, death."

Consequently, Eriksen says: "Our mantra is to make every mouthful count. We are



very focused on that agenda through the offer of real foods fortified. Last year we launched AdVital which is low GI and low GL, a one scoop serve with 15g protein. It is easy to digest, prepare and add to a huge cross section of foods and fluids. We published a recipe book enabling its use to incorporate into your everyday life – from athletes to the elderly." Eriksen adds: "We are about to launch a new product in June to further assist the texture modification of foods."

The Flavour Creations Dysphagia cup will become available in Australia and internationally from June 2016. The product will be distributed to hospitals, residential aged care and directly to consumers living at home in the community. ■

By Liesbeth Thijssen