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How New Zealand's Scientific Green Beauty Brand Was Born: The Story Behind Antipodes

Before anyone thought to put the words “green” and “science” in the same sentence, the founder of Antipodes, Elizabeth Barbalich, was creating premium natural skincare that did just that. The seed of an idea flourished into a pioneering Scientific Green Beauty brand. Launched in 2006, Antipodes has gone on to win global awards and worldwide devotees for its scientifically validated formulations that bring the best of New Zealand nature to the world.

Beginnings

Science, innovation, and the spirituality of nature are woven into the fabric of Elizabeth's life. The daughter of a Presbyterian minister and a schoolteacher, she grew up on the sprawling Canterbury plains of New Zealand's rugged South Island. Having studied for a science degree before embarking on an MBA, the mother of three then won a highly competitive role with a US-based surgical corporation pioneering technology for laparoscopic (keyhole) surgery. Elizabeth trained in New York before going on to become the sole representative for New Zealand and Australia.

Inspired by innovation

Training surgeons and registrars to use the specialist equipment opened Elizabeth's eyes to the power of innovation, creativity, and robust scientific thinking. During her eight years with the company, she was twice named top salesperson (Asia Pacific) for a new product launch – planting the seeds for what was to follow. Her stint with the organisation taught her valuable lessons she would bring to New Zealand's Scientific Green Beauty brand.

Family first

As the desire to create high-performing natural skincare took shape, Elizabeth had the support of a family as passionate about health, wellness, and nature as she was. In fact, it was Elizabeth's husband Zoran who first inspired her to adopt a natural lifestyle. “My husband developed a real interest in natural health,” she says. “He introduced our family to lifestyle choices such as raw juices, supplements, and alternative medicines. Back then, even with three children under four, I felt healthy and energised.”

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A need that wasn't being met

Elizabeth scoured the world for a natural product that was hydrating enough for her dry skin. Unable to find natural skincare that performed as well as conventional brands – full of synthetic and even toxic ingredients – the gap in the market became obvious. “I saw the need for a cool, avant-garde niche brand that elevated natural skincare to the next level,” she says. With her background in science, an in-depth understanding of product formulations, and a passion for wellness and natural health, Elizabeth set out to tie it all together: clean, green, scientific skincare.

Brand development

To fully understand the complexities of natural skincare, Elizabeth took time to perfect formulations before enlisting the help of a cosmetic chemist and a French perfumier to take the Antipodes range to market. The brand was the first to utilise the revolutionary Vinanza Grape in its formulations – a powerful antioxidant extract sourced from Marlborough sauvignon blanc grapes, with among the highest levels of polyphenolic antioxidants in the world. Pairing this innovative ingredient with New Zealand superfoods and superfruits such as world-famous manuka honey, bioactive mamaku black fern and nutrient-rich avocado oil, Elizabeth focused on ensuring that Antipodes formulations were not just natural. They had to deliver genuine results for skin. Antipodes' distinctive packaging and scientifically validated formulations launched in 2006 and are now sold in more than 40 markets globally, via both ecommerce platforms and bricks-and-mortar retailers.

The Antipodes Green Beauty Ethos

Central to the pioneering skincare brand are core values of independent certification, scientifically validated performance, clean and natural ingredients, and sustainability.

- The brand's organic, vegan and vegetarian skincare is independently certified by respected international organisations, who audit the brand annually;
- High-performing products are backed by clinical trials and robust scientific testing, which measure the ability of end formulations to stimulate collagen in fibroblast skin cells and protect from oxidative stress. A trial product can take up to 18 months of research and development;
- Formulations are clean and toxin-free, with only natural origin ingredients;
- The brand has sustainability in mind at all parts of the process. Elizabeth is passionate about using recyclable packaging printed with eco inks, local production in New Zealand, and working with suppliers who favour organic and sustainable farming methods.

A home in Wellington

Made in New Zealand and privately owned, Antipodes is based in Wellington, New Zealand's vibrant capital city. The architecturally designed, award-winning headquarters is home to over 40 staff, and – despite being in the middle of the city – is never far from the lush forests and bush walks that continue to provide Elizabeth with divine inspiration. “Daily work for me at Antipodes, even all these years after launch, is still a drive for continuous improvement in every area of the business,” she says. “We deliver the highest performance skincare we can produce, and we never compromise on quality.”