

Füritechnics - Cutting edge technology protected and exploited worldwide

Good niche market knowledge, determination and innovative Australian design have produced a unique knife range, called Furi. Already, high profile chefs the world over are hailing Furi as the best knife on the market.

Crafting professional chef's knives may not seem like an obvious field for technological innovation. However, prominent chefs are viewing the Furi knife as a major revolution in knife technology.

Mark Henry developed a knife design that is proving to be a valuable and increasingly popular piece of intellectual property (IP) - property he has protected through formal IP rights with IP Australia. Knowing that he fully intended to export, Mark also applied for rights with the UK and the US Patent Office and the European Union IP Office.

When Mark founded Füritechnics in 1996, he set out to design a knife to solve all the common problems with traditional knives. Says Mark, "We have devoted a lot of research and development time to find the perfect handle shape for all cutting situations. We even approached chefs with arthritis to help us develop the most comfortable shape."

The result is that the handle and blade are one seamless piece of stainless steel. An obvious choice when you think about overcoming hygiene and durability problems common with plastic or wood handles. Obvious to Mark and his team perhaps, but this solution had never been available to chefs before Mark designed the Furi range.

Distinguishing features include the high-carbon stainless steel material, which holds a good edge and is easier to sharpen than most conventional knives. Another feature lies in the non-slip knife handle. "The vertical microgrooves in the handle surface help, but the tapered handle, which resembles a wedge, resists hand slip towards the blade. This innovative combination 'locks' the hand to the handle as cutting pressure is applied. This shape also seems to reduce chronic-fatigue hand damage" explains Mark.

"Most chefs using the Furi range are unaware of the technology behind the features. All they know is that the Furi is easier to use. And that suits us! We, on the other hand, knew early on that we had hit on something big and we didn't want to lose our special design to copycats." Mark successfully applied to IP Australia for patent protection on the handle shape, and a trade mark for the brand name, Furi.

The brand name Furi is a twist on fury – a synonym for passion. Some chefs are renowned for their passion in the kitchen so this name seems very appropriate. In



any case, the name has struck a chord with the market.

"Certainly for us, the selection and trade marking of our brand was almost as important as our technology", adds Mark.

It seems that this approach has worked. Füritechnics is achieving impressive (and rising) sales in the US, Canada, UK, Italy and South Africa. Shortly, Japan, Germany and France will be targeted too.

"Füritechnics basically is an IP business. We don't own high levels of fixed or 'hard' assets and focus instead on enhancing our 'soft' assets such as our brands, trade marks, product design and people skills. Our business strategy focuses on developing brands and distribution channels – we outsource all our manufacturing to key overseas suppliers and repatriate the profits. Wary of being ripped off, before we signed any manufacturing agreements we included specific clauses to ensure our IP is protected at all stages of production."

Mark goes on to say, "IP is at the very core of our business strategy and this approach is working well for us. Protecting our IP, essentially our competitive edge, has enabled us to fully exploit our technology and our brand overseas. Without IP protection, the very core of our business would be at great risk. The combination of our brand strength with our customer base and our manufacturing ability also constitutes a protective measure against copyists."

Mark invented the technology and invented the business around it – and protected both with IP rights.