

**More than your bread & butter –
how customer intimacy and innovation is paying off**

Catherine Beard

I caught up with Nic Wetere, CEO of Canary Enterprises Ltd, fresh off the plane from Singapore where she had been attending the Food & Hotel Asia Trade Show. This event is synonymous with the food and hospitality industry in Asia and internationally, spanning across 10 huge warehouses.

“It was an amazing experience – the buzz and excitement of working with like-minded companies in the NZ Pavilion with NZTE, and seeing so many NZ companies doing amazingly innovative things. You wonder why you haven’t heard of them! It’s a great event for networking and showcasing,” says Nic.



Left to right in the picture: Hayley Horan NZ Trade Commissioner to Singapore, Winston Peters Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nic Wetere - CEO of Canary Enterprises, Derek Bartosh – Director of Canary, Matt Mountfort – Global Sales Manager for Canary.

While you may have seen the Canary brand clarified butter in New Zealand supermarkets, Canary’s products go beyond this to individual portions of butter medallions and rosettes. They were exporting from day one; now producing over 200,000 portions of butter a day to countries all over the world, including their biggest customers in Australia, Thailand and the UAE.

As a food innovator and manufacturer of quality, premium dairy products, Canary's model is all about being in the niche market, premium product space. "We've been around 16 years, and it all started with seeing an opportunity in the market where we could deliver premium butter products to end consumers, while helping to reduce their cost and add value," says Nic.

"It's a pure New Zealand butter product so customers have full traceability, plus as a further processor we can customize. We work really closely with our end users to identify exactly what they need.

"Canary offers a more customized experience. We partner with our end users to ensure we're delivering what they actually require.

"Our customer intimacy model means we think like our customers do – e.g. forecasting for them, predicting when they're going to run out of stock. Things like that ensure they're getting a full service, rather than simply being sold a product."

One of their major segments is airlines, for whom they make butter medallions. "It's pretty amazing when you actually stop and think about how our products literally end up all over the world!" says Nic.

A lot of Canary's hotel customers have their logos embossed onto the butter medallions, and this USP is something they are working on with airlines too. "It's a big focus for us to give customers that level of customization so we're creating something they can identify as their own.

"Our point of difference in our quality products is our innovation and the New Zealand brand. Our medallions get delivered in a carton, already on a line of paper. They're then plated by the customer. A lot of our competitors' products are in a plastic wrapper. By not packaging our butter this way, our customers can serve it how they choose, plus there's less waste, and more space from a shipping and storage point of view."

The company has India and Vietnam in their sights next, as well as new blended innovations to meet customer price point needs.

Nic's Top Tips

- If you have a distribution model like us, it pays to really do your homework and ensure you're matching yourself with like-minded people. The culture's got to fit. You can't sell a product without the right people.
- Utilize NZTE's in-market research to help you find the right person.

- Be flexible enough in your strategy that you can take up opportunities when they arise. We consider everything that comes our way.
- Get in front of your customers. Our sales team are out every 2-3 months meeting with distributors.
- Use your network for getting on-the-ground intelligence. We're such a small community in the NZ food space, so share recommendations and utilize your contacts.