

The inside Scoop on award-winning ice cream

By Pasqua Heard

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Last week, Skinny Scoop won the Editor's Choice Award for the annual South African Food Review - a notable achievement for a product that has been in existence for just over a year. The founders of the delectable, health-focused ice cream, Gabi Esposito and Jarred Plu'g, share the backstory including why the product is the first of its kind.

Plu'g started as Esposito's personal trainer and progressed to become her business partner. With their entrepreneurial and fearless mindset, the two make a formidable team. Both have a range of past work experience which set them in good stead for their current venture. Plu'g studied exercise science, a Bcom and a Bmus and practiced as a personal trainer. He also played in the band 'Black Tie Trio' and performed solos too. Esposito studied photography and founded an online bakery called [Bake by Gabriella](#). While she appreciates working for herself, Esposito also sees the value that entrepreneurship has in creating job opportunities for others.



Gabi Esposito and Jarred Plu'g, Skinny Scoop founders

■ Tell us the story behind Skinny Scoop.

Esposito: Jarred used to be my personal trainer and I would often bake healthy treats and bring him some to snack on during our sessions. I came up with a protein ice cream after becoming jealous of my mom and sister's weekly Myog visits. At this time I was preparing for a fitness show, so my diet was very clean. I brought the ice cream to Jarred and he couldn't believe it. He had the same idea a few years previously, but he didn't have a recipe/partner/money to start it all himself. We decided this was fate and had to give our idea a go. The rest is history!

Plu'g: From my side, I saw a huge transition in the health and wellness industry in 2010 and started looking at new products in the market, healthy/protein ice cream and yoghurt was something I was keen on introducing, as no one was doing it and most 'health products' still contained loads of refined sugar. Somewhere towards the end of 2014 Gabs was trying out her own homemade ice creams for health snacks on the meal plan, so we chatted about growing a brand and introducing the best health ice cream EVER to the market.

■ What is your favourite Skinny Scoop flavour?

Esposito: Honestly it depends on the weather. In summer Vanilla is my go-to treat, but on those winter nights there's nothing better than a tub of Afterdark Cacao. Let's not even talk about the peanut butter. Now that's my addiction.

Plu'g: It's like choosing a favourite between your kids! All three!

■ Explain what makes your product innovative/a first of its kind.

Our product is innovative due to its sleek branding, delicious flavour and healthy benefits. We pride ourselves on using only natural ingredients that will satisfy one's sweet tooth without any guilt! Skinny Scoop is decadent and rich, AND it's good for you.

Also, Skinny Scoop is the first premium protein ice cream in South Africa. We use only natural, wholesome ingredients. We use a combination of grass fed cows' milk and cream, a dash of xylitol, raw vanilla powder / raw chocolate powder/ raw peanut butter, imported raw whey protein isolate and then we bind it all together with our natural stabilizer sodium alginate, which is found in brown algae/seaweed.

Skinny Scoop not only discards the use of sugar as the main base, but it has whey isolate which has a complete amino acid profile (all the aminos/building blocks) your body needs for muscle recovery and general maintenance of healthy body tissue. Having this high protein content, no added sugar and half the fat and calories of regular ice cream results in a stable blood sugar and cuts cravings.

■ Explain the concept behind your product design.

We wanted to move away from the norm when it comes to ice cream. When you think of gelato, you think summer. Bright, colourful and playful. Due to our product having an opposite attraction from regular sugar-laden ice cream, we thought why not go opposite with the colour scheme, too. So, we decided black and white with a touch of colour and choose a name that was striking and alluring.

■ What have you found to be your best marketing tools?

Social media without a doubt. Promotions/tasting tables are also fantastic for building better customer relationships and growth.

■ Tell us about any recent updates you've made to your product.

We have just released our new Peanut Butter Zoey flavour and plan on releasing a whole new ice cream trend in December this year. We also launched skinny scoop with white based lids last year, but decided to go with all black after a few months on the shelves.



Peanut Butter Zoey flavour

■ What does your latest win mean for Skinny Scoop?

This is definitely the biggest and most honourable award we have ever received and we are extremely grateful to Food Review for the opportunity. We have only been operating for 14 months, so this is the most amazing gift after months of hard work. For us, it means a few things, namely the fact that we get to go to sleep knowing that our artisan product is enjoyed and respected by a large food company. That just doesn't happen to us (the little guys). It also means opportunity for growth when it comes to retail as now all the big guys from Woolies and famous brands will (hopefully) start to notice us! It also means we have an awesome award in our average office. #winning

■ Any further business updates up your sleeve that your customers can look out for?

We have plans to release an entire new concept in Cape Town in December this year which can be enjoyed by EVERYONE! That's the only clue I can put forward for now. Then we are releasing a whole new product range middle of next year that is going to be slightly more "kid friendly" when it comes to pricing, colour and playfulness. We have a brilliant idea for kids and adults to enjoy so we are really excited to get the ball rolling here!

Find out more about Skinny Scoop below:

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