

Product case studies: Good Grips

Rory Coleman **Better by design**



Good Grip kitchen utensils have special handles designed to be comfortable and easy to use and hold. The basic range includes most standard items – knives, measuring spoons and cups, whisk, sieve, scissors, two varieties of peeler, and is being constantly extended cover all cooking activities with the addition of wooden spoons and utensils, ice-cream scoops, garlic crusher, vegetable brush, apple-corer, and so on. A garden range is also being developed, beginning with fork, trowel and other small items. A key feature of the product is the large diameter handles, which are made from non-slip Santoprene rubber. These are easy to hold, soft to handle, and give better leverage in use. Each handle features patented soft spot grips on either side which provide extra friction and act as contact points.

The design of the handle distributes the gripping force and by doing so minimises the amount of hand strength normally required. This allows safe and effective use of all utensils, and a comfortable, cushioned grip for everyone, regardless of age or ability. Among recent additions to the range is a new design of kettle which combines ease of use with safety features and attractive modern styling. The elegant integral heat shield protects the user from accidental scalding, while the rubber handle is set low on the body to reduce wrist strain when pouring, insulates against heat and will not slip in wet hands. The spout cap locks open with a simple motion for easier pouring and filling, and the large lid is easy to remove yet seals tightly when in place.



Good Grips were designed by Smart Design of New York, and produced for Sam Farber by the OXO company (part of the U.S. General Housewares Corporation, and no relation to OXO in the UK). Betsey Farber developed arthritis which seriously restricted her enjoyment of cooking and as Sam, her husband, had already up a good business wholesaling kitchen equipment he felt this was something he knew about and could do something about. Having sold out his original business he invested some of that money in developing a completely new product – Good Grips. Sam's skills were in marketing and selling products, which meant he understood the value good design can add to a product, making all the difference between success and failure and, believing he had a winning idea on his hands, brought in a leading New York design company – Smart Design – to work on the project.

The result of this collaboration is a high quality, good looking, functional product range that works well and appeals to people of all ages. Top cooks use Good Grips, upmarket kitchen shops and major supermarket chains stock the range, and the volume of sales means that all the items are modestly priced. Outside the United States the range is handled by committed distributors like Jim Wilkinson Promotions in the UK. Jim Wilkinson has spent his life in the business of cookware and kitchenware and believes that the future lies in high quality products that work really well – of which the Good Grips range is a prime example. The very rapid expansion of sales in the UK bears witness to the market that is available if the product is right and its special features effectively promoted. All of which bears out the contention that many apparent disabilities—like the difficulties experienced by Betsey Farber – can be minimised through good design that matches the functionality of products with the abilities of the widest range of users, and does so in a stylish way that can, with careful positioning, command a good market share.

