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That sweet smell of success; man's bracelets repel mosquitoes

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Oy, mate, its OK, gave me a chance to finish up another cup of coffee," Australian entrepreneur Joseph Symond said after I'd excused myself for not calling him last week at the arranged 8:30 a.m. time. "Bit of a wild night."

Symond lives in Los Angeles; he moved from his native Australia to produce television shows and movies. And you'd think that a big-time producer -- he's worked with Penny Marshall of "A League of Their Own" fame -- would have the sort of wild nights associated with the glitz and glamour of Hollywood.

Wrong.

"Bit of problem with my fianc's dog, you know?" he said. "Got himself sprayed by a skunk."

Instead of heading into the night to get a commercial skunk shampoo, Symond reached into a cabinet for a bottle of eucalyptus oil to slather on the dog.

"I've got a lot of essential oils, eh," he said. "But now my fianc's complaining about the eucalyptus smell. Told her is was better then skunk, mate."

Scent is Symond's passion. In fact, he's now more noted for his Bug BAM! all-natural mosquito-repellant products, than he is for movie and television production. And that's OK by him.

"You gotta understand, all of Australia's population centers are all infested with mosquitoes," he said. "I grew up getting bit all the time."

It was either that, or being slathered with DEET. While diethyltoluamide is effective in keeping biting bugs away, it is a powerful chemical that can eat plastic and cause all sorts of serious medical side affects.

In the mid-90s, Symond first began to experiment with essential oils to put out a stronger scent than we give out, which effectively gets the biters to leave us alone. Mosquitoes are attracted to the carbon dioxide we expel, along with all the odors we spread on ourselves, like perfume, lotion and deodorant.

Only the female mosquito bites; she needs blood to fertilize her eggs and can produce 1,000 eggs in her short, three-to-four-week lifespan.

"And mosquitoes will adapt to any chemicals out there in four lifecycles," Symond said. "Bug BAM! is made from plants, naturally occurring scents that change every time we make it."

So far, Symond has found a way to put his formula into bracelets (they look like Lance Armstrong's ever-popular LiveSTRONG bracelet), a camp grid and small, battery-operated fans that pump out the formula for

backyard barbecues. Currently, he's working on a spray -- "That way we can get people over their psychosis of needing to be sprayed, like when they were little kids," he said -- and all natural sprays and wipes for dogs and horses.

"We went out and tested all of it," Symond said. "I used my family and friends, because when you use your family and friends, they're not going to be afraid to tell you it's a load of garbage."

Since those tests, Bug BAM! products have been sent to the U.S. Navy in Cuba and are being used by Richard Branson, the renegade British entrepreneur and adventurer.

"I was talking to Sir Richard at a party about his island, Necker Island," Symond said of the head of the Virgin empire and his private resort in the British Virgin Islands. "He was telling me it was infested with mosquitoes. I told him, I can help you out, mate,' and sent him some bracelets.

"I'm now the exclusive supplier for his island."

Adult Bug BAM! bracelets retail for \$2.99 for 100 hours of effective use (you just have to keep the resealable packaging). To order your own Bug BAM! products, visit www.bugbam.com.

The products all smell like lemon Pledge on steroids -- and not unlike your grandmother's formal dining room.

"Hey, it smells, yes, but you're in the outdoors," Symond said of his products. "Plus its food-grade, so if a baby puts it in its mouth, it might taste bad, but it won't hurt him.

"You cant say that about DEET."

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