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**BIG, BLUE & STRAIGHT TO YOU: THE LI’L DUMPLING VAN & ISUZU**

‘Dim sum’ (not to be confused with ‘[dim sim’](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dim_sim)) is traditionally enjoyed with tea and shared as a light meal with others. The words translated from Chinese means to ‘touch the heart’—which many would say is just precisely want these delicious morsels are designed to do.

You could be forgiven, however, for not wanting to share your plate from [The Li’l Dumpling Van](https://thelildumplingvan.com.au/) with anyone at all.

Breaking with the tradition of sitting down to eat with a pot of tea, these dumplings are served standing up and steaming hot on a paper plate. They can only be found at festivals and special events in Geelong and surrounds in Victoria, such as Bannockburn, Lara and Winchelsea.

Be it beef, chicken, pork or vegan varieties, these dumplings are handmade using only natural vegetable colouring and ingredients sourced locally from suppliers in the region.

**Refined simplicity**

“We want to make sure it’s simple but just right with only four flavours,” explained Emma Ma, joint owner of The Li’l Dumpling Van.

“You’ll see our dumplings change colour throughout the year, because we use fresh carrot, spinach, and beetroot. Every batch is different because the veggies are different each time.

“Our dumplings are all handmade, the dough, the filling, and the colours which all come from veggies… it takes a lot of labour, but all makes our product special.”

The idea for The Li’l Dumpling Van came about in February 2020, just before the COVID-19 lockdowns in Victoria. Emma unfortunately lost her job as an early childhood educator and husband Herris Wang (the chef of the operation) was facing job uncertainty too.

Their initial plan of serving dumplings at festivals and events was adapted over the following two years to offer home delivery of frozen dumplings instead.

**Into the wild**

Once the lockdowns were over, Emma and Herris were able to set the business free and began offering up pan-fried dumplings to punters on-the-go. On the transport side of things, this meant a mobile kitchen on a trailer, which was hooked onto their passenger ute.

Finding this combination functional, but not ideal, they then moved on to a light-duty truck with a built-in kitchen, which allowed them to store and serve more dumplings on event day.

Having outgrown their original namesake in a most satisfactory manner, The Li’l Dumpling Van has now expanded operations with a big, new (and very blue) Isuzu truck designed to stand out from the crowd.

“Lots of people say it’s not exactly ‘little’—maybe that’s the funny thing about it,” Emma mused.

“We wanted to do ‘little,’ but slowly it just happened to evolve into the biggest dumpling truck in the market!

“Probably 80 per cent of children think we are the ice cream truck, but we don’t mind,” she continued, with a laugh.

“As long as we’ve got your attention, the design is working!”

**Fit for purpose**

Requiring an 8.5-metre-long chassis to accommodate their new custom-designed kitchen and servery from [Frank’s Food Vans](https://franksfoodvans.com/) in Tullamarine, Emma and Herris landed-on a [NQR 87/80-190](https://www.isuzu.com.au/our-range/series/n-series/) with 6-speed Automated Manual Transmission (AMT) recommended by the team at [Geelong Isuzu](https://www.geelongisuzu.com.au/).

The NQR features a GVM of 8,700 kg and a GCM of 12,200 kg, with a turbocharged four-cylinder 4HK1-TCC engine that can reliably draw the weight of the required kitchen equipment and supplies.

The ability of the NQR platform to safely float the weight of the custom build was a key issue for Emma and Herris, who were investing a significant amount of money into the production of their new business venture.

The NQR’s steel spring suspension with double acting hydraulic shock absorbers on front and rear, in combination with a total axle capacity of 9,700 kg, far exceeding the 8,700 kg GVM, put any concerns to rest.

“With the heavy build and the appliances, we knew we needed a strong, quality truck and a reliable brand if wanted to keep it going for at least 10 years,” Herris explained.

“So, we started asking around and people from other food trucks would say, ‘If you want cheap you go this way, but if you want quality, you choose Isuzu.’

“We were very happy to go with Isuzu.”

**Safety first**

As designated driver and an operator in the public domain, Herris says that safety is at the top of his list of priorities in a vehicle.

The NQR's elevated driving position and the cab’s extra-large windscreen and windows offers excellent visibility and comfort for handling the truck in close quarters.

Isuzu’s [Advanced Driver Assistance Systems](https://www.geelongisuzu.com.au/our-range/series/n-series/#features) (ADAS) also helps Herris with awareness of the truck’s surroundings while bumping in and out of event sites.

“I need to be careful because it’s a big truck, so the proximity sensor warnings and safety cameras—everything to do with safety is very helpful for what we do.

“I feel totally safe, comfortable, and that’s a big advantage for me,” said Herris.

“The upgraded multimedia system that supports Apple CarPlay is also handy, I can use Google Maps easily now which I couldn’t in our older model truck.”

Herris feels that the business is ‘fully covered’ by Isuzu with its industry-leading [six warranty and six-year roadside assist program](https://www.isuzu.com.au/customer-care/6-year-warranty-roadside-assist/), plus the always-on expertise of their local [Geelong Isuzu dealership](https://www.geelongisuzu.com.au/) keeping the business growing.

**New horizons**

Now they’ve been around the local event circuit for a few years, what keeps the dynamic dumpling duo serving up their ‘little touches of heart’ to the crowds?

According to Emma, it’s simply love for the job and getting to see new sights and people.

“I’m so happy to have this job. It’s opened my eyes to different places and different things—like car shows, 4x4s, Formula One, the Air Show—all these kinds of things I would never have considered, but now I get to see them,” she said.

“We want to use this new truck as much as we can and maybe in the future visit other states and see how that goes.

“Our favourite places to go are community events like the school multicultural events… those are the people who supported us in the beginning, which I really appreciate, so we’re always happy to go back and visit them.

“We’re very lucky to have met lots of local people who recognise our dumplings and recommend them to each other.”

**ends**

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