

## Life with an Engel

“Bugger! that will have stuffed it” said Deb as we removed the last of thirteen broken beer bottles from our Engel. I’d put the fridge on the back of our tandem trailer just for the short trip between Balclutha and Dunedin, two south island towns. All the bouncing had shaken up the beer so badly it had started to pop off the tops. What didn’t blow up was shattered by the fizzy grenades next to them.

Not very clever really but I was in a hurry to pack and it was really shitty outside. It was colder out of the fridge than in it as we had just had a freak snow storm. Knowing how well insulated the Engel was I wasn’t worried about serving up the woman a warm Speights upon our arrival at our motel for the night.



I’d better start at the beginning. In January 2006 we took possession of a 40 litre Engel fridge / freezer. Richard and his team from Papakura Auto Electrical the Auckland ARB and Engel agents did an awesome job of mounting it in the back of our ST-X Navara. I was wary of it taking up too much deck space so the guys mounted it on a sliding deck thingy. Bloody great! It disappears to the front of the deck when travelling and pops to the back at the flick of a knob when needing access. The Engel comes with both 230 volt and a 12 volt cables so it was no worries for Richards’ guys to hard wire in a female socket into the rear deck.

That sorted the travelling and base power supply but left me wondering how to run the fridge while working in the field or camping. Again Richard came to the rescue. A gel cell battery was provided along with a charging circuit mounted in the rear right alongside the fridge. The concept is that we can remove the fridge from the ute (to protect the beer!) and run on the gel cell. Then when done for the day we could remount the Engel and charge the gel cell while travelling to the next venue.

Does it work? Does it ever! The best we’ve done is three days camping running the fridge totally on the gel cell battery and never a warm beer. Of course the butter, milk, meat and veges were fine too, but none of the latter affects my sex life like producing warm beer!!!

I was so impressed with the set up Richard provided I said I’d jot a few notes on my Engel experience, but not before putting it through the full monty. That included a year of commercial use and some pretty heavy camping trips. As I said while heading out of the show room “if it doesn’t bloody perform it’s no good to me, or to anyone else who demands serious kit”



I’m not big on the details like how much power it draws, or how it works, that’s “technocrap” I just want to know that it’s gonna work, period. If you want details talk to the guys that sell them, but listen carefully because they know what they are talking about and it’s all true.

So what has the Engel done to get this high praise? I guess just getting on with what it is supposed to do leaving me to get on with my own job list. Not making a big song and dance (it’s darned quiet) and being indestructible. It took a few internal dents from those thirteen bottles of beer I mentioned earlier, and I took a few external dents from someone who had warm beer for dinner!!! Bugger.

There are a few things worth mentioning. It’s a fridge / freezer right?. So having had plenty of other lesser brands I didn’t put much clout in it being able to make ice or even keep frozen foods frozen.

Well it does! Easily. Richard wasn’t joking when he told me the Engel could make ice in a desert! Considering this beastie is made to be effective in the harshest climate on earth, the Australian Outback. I guess it should be no surprise here. To date I’ve made a snowball from a lettuce etc (make a note to watch you don’t bump the dial while packing the truck!!!”

The lid is designed to be totally removed making it easy to load and clean. Because of the serious quantity of gear we carry (We carry everything we need to live for 90% of the year) the Engel is mounted on the lower of two deck levels. To access the fridge while fully loaded we have to slide the lid off. It's an easy task and adds to the versatility of the unit. Means we can access water bottles kept chilled.



Deb loves the fridge. She can now carry serious quantities of good wholesome food along with beer between venues. It also gives her double the cooler space in motels (Our Engel is nearly as big as those motel fridges, and certainly more efficient!)

Our 40 litre Engel has a posh digital temp gauge on it and a simple dial to set the temp. I was sceptical as to how long this gauge would keep working under extreme conditions. This gauge has a separate mini alkaline battery so it keeps working even when the fridge isn't plugged in, and yes I've replaced the battery. Not hard, if you can tie your shoe laces you'll manage the battery job.

This year we will get to spend four weeks home, total. That's the whole of the rest of the year living from motels and from our 4wd. The Engel is a part of our everyday existence. Filling / emptying, mounting and carrying the whole kit and caboodle in and out of motels and tents. Chucking our gear over, round and on top of it on a daily basis.

It doesn't look new anymore. But it does wear it's battle scars with a sense of pride. A bloke said to me the other day "jeez you're a bit hard on your Engel aren't you?" "What was I supposed to do, wrap it in cotton wool?" I replied. I mentioned how rough it looked when last talking to Richard. No worries he said, let's chuck a cover over it, that will make it look new again. He's a clever bugger is Richard.



That should make it look the part when being utilised this Christmas as my ice slurry bucket. Just because we're going to be home doesn't mean my Engel gets time off. No bloody way, and it does the thing good to be turned on even when not travelling I'm told.

I'll do another report on our Engel next year. I imagine it will mention less paint, more dents and a happy woman! There's a moral to this story. When you've finished mucking around with the lesser brands of portable fridges give one of these Engel portable fridge freezers a serious gander. They are serious pieces of kit that really are worth their weight in cold stubbies etc. They might even improve your sex life!