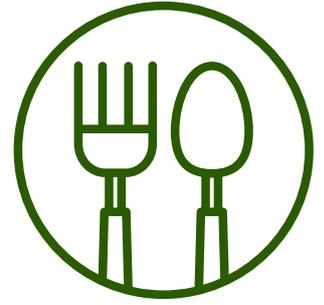


Local Food Innovators: Like Minds



Nestled amongst the native plants, local art and oozing good vibes, Like Minds has made Avoca Beach's old general store a gathering place for great coffee, wholesome food and nourishing conversations.

We spoke to Mel about coffee, community and sustainability.

Like Minds has been serving up artisanal coffee and nourishing food since 2014. Walk us through your journey from then until now.

We opened our doors in January 2014 with a steel bench for Jimmy's coffee machine, one burner and a toastie press in a tiny kitchen, and no money left in our pockets. It wasn't much, but it was fun and we made it work.

Back then, we hosted a lot of workshops, events and art exhibitions, but now we really focus on the coffee and food. Now, we only host events when our hearts are truly in it, but we still fill our space with local art.

Our garden is such a source of joy. It's great seeing the locals chill amongst our native plants (courtesy of our mate Ads at **Wilder Gardens**), and I love learning to cook with what we grow. The first trees we planted, a coffee tree and a gifted kaffir lime tree (thank you Lizottes!), are still happily growing and giving, alongside a lovely shady avocado tree which we grew from seed. And we always have heaps of edibles including herbs, bananas, natives and spices.

You've become more than a café. Like Minds is a meeting place where people enjoy real conversations with old and new friends. Why is community so important to you?

For us, community is the joy of living. It's so important to feel like you're part of something, so we always set an intention to make our shop feel like home.

We opened our space and our hearts to a community that we didn't really know. Over five years, and lots of coffee and conversations, they have become our family. The community energy grew naturally, so many friendships have blossomed in our garden and it's been a great place to host produce swaps and permaculture talks.

Any local coffee shop will say the same, your locals become like family, these are people we see almost every day, we share laughs and sometimes even tears with them.

It's a great feeling. Community is something we all need to invest in.

Some locals have dubbed Like Minds coffee as the best on the Coast. What's your secret?

No secret, we just love what we do and we do it with good intentions and care.

We serve **Fat Poppy Coffee** because we fell in love with the flavour. And it's such a pleasure working with former local Sasha, the owner. She always makes ethical decisions because she really cares about the coffee growers and the communities she sources from. It's great supporting a female coffee roaster in such a male dominated industry.

When we opened in 2014 there weren't many artisan coffee shops on the Coast, but now there's so many to choose from and we absolutely love it! We spend most Monday's off somewhere on the Coast getting someone else to make us a cuppa joe! We've always been great fans of Loo Loos in Kincumber, they really set a coffee scene here on the Coast and we have always been grateful for their support when we started.

How would you describe your drool-worthy menu? Your meals are always so fresh and vibrant. Where do you source your produce?

Our focus has always been on quality and not quantity. We keep the menu small and celebrate seasonal ingredients through our dishes.

Over the years we've taken time to get to know our farmers and producers. We have great relationships with them. They have helped us reduce our packaging waste and we've even been able to spend time on some of the farms. It's another beautiful aspect of the community here at Like Minds where we all support each other to thrive.

We have so much respect for our farmers, farming is hard yakka! We are so lucky to have more young farmers popping up here on the Central Coast. You'll sometimes find our mate Kieran from **Fiatarone Farm** with a pop up stall in our garden selling his nutrient dense veggies, the locals love it! Other local producers we support include **Nurtured Earth Organics, Black Radish Kombucha, Matcham Valley Veggies, The Egg Shed,** and **Full Circle Farm.**

We've heard locals rave about your cooking and pickling classes. Tell us more about these?

Pickle Club has just started. When I can get an abundance of produce from the farmers I'll host a Monday morning at the café around the table pickling and chatting. I share my pickling and preserving knowledge but I also learn from others around the table too. It's a great way to spend a Monday.

We also have guest chef's visits. Most recently **Om Cade** from Byron Bay stopped in for a few classes while he was travelling down the East Coast. He totally has inspired me to be more adventurous with spices and really focus on my intention and emotion when I'm cooking. Both his classes sold out, and I've noticed a definite call from people wanting to learn about food as medicine.

You're self-proclaimed waste-warriors. Tell us more about your zero waste ethos and your creative approach to sustainability?

It's been part of our journey since pre café years. It was part of our home and then naturally became part of our business.

It's difficult to be honest. There have been times we've wanted to get out because the hospitality industry is just full of environmental issues. We are always learning and finding inspiration from people we meet, books we read and mistakes we make. And over the years, we've developed tons of sustainability and mindfulness hacks for small business. We'd love to help more cafés and producers make better environmental decisions.

Working with suppliers and producers who align with our vision has really helped us reduce our waste.

We compost all of our food waste. No short cuts, no machinery, just Jimmy and a few local helpers, who spend hours each week tending to our composting station which he built in a local community garden. He's obsessed with compost and loves giving people tips on making it for their own veggie patches.

Plus, there are so many ways to make food go further. It's lots of fun making oils, vinegars, pickles, salts, brines, jams and syrups with food parts that you would normally throw away.

An estimated 2,700,000 coffee cups are disposed of by Australians every single day. Are you looking to phase out single-use coffee cups?

We're proud to be one of the 4,736 **registered responsible cafés** across Australia fighting the war on waste. We've inspired so many of our regulars to use keep cups and it's such a great sight to see a line up of keep cups in the morning rush in lieu of single use cups. When they forget to bring their cup, we hand out old jam jars, and all the neighbours take our ceramic cups home and return them later.

We also use biodegradable single use cups. They are paper and we compost any that are returned, but they are a temporary solution for us as we know most of these cups still end up in landfill. So we're excited to hear the news of a circular keep cup system starting here on the Coast very soon! In the meantime we are doing our best to educate people and change habits.

What's next for Like Minds?

You're going to see some exciting dinners starting again this summer and we've started Like Minds mobile, which means you can have us at your next event, wedding or workplace serving coffees.

Plus we have another bubba on the way, it's going to be a busy summer 2020!



Images courtesy of Jacs Powell

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