

Local Food Innovators: LooLoo's Cafes



Adaptability has become a familiar word within hospitality, with so many in the industry changing the way they do business to adapt to the evolving COVID-19 restrictions. Whether it's developing new processes to pivoting from dine-in to takeaway, it's been a year of adapting, adopting and adjusting.

We talk to local coffee institution, LooLoo's, to hear how they have used the 'new norm' to continue serving great coffee and become more sustainable.

LooLoo's has become quite the institution for communities around MacMasters Beach and Kincumber, can you tell us how the cafes started?

LooLoo and Instaurator have been in the coffee industry for some time - Instaurator has been roasting coffee for 35 years while LooLoo has been managing a variety of self-established cafes on the Central Coast for almost 20 years.

In 2010, LooLoo's Coffee Warehouse was established in Kincumber's Industrial Estate, selling some of the most affordable and tasty coffee on the coast – and the LooLoo's Private Blend beans to take home, were a price that could not be beaten by other coffee brands. By word of mouth, we trusted that the genuine customer service and yummy coffee would bring great growth in good time! And it did indeed!

LooLoo's Coffee Warehouse was - and still is - a renowned local watering hole. The customers are like family now, and they treat us like family too – we really look after each other in the mutual exchange of more than just coffee, but the sense of community and shared connection. We know that we deliver the best coffee and toasties around town, but without our community, we wouldn't be where we are today.

That feeling of community brought us to the idea of opening our second café in MacMasters Beach in 2016, after the sudden vacancy of the historical shop space (variously used as a fruit and veggie shop, antique shop, general store, and a coffee shop over the decades). With a little more of LooLoo's love and life to provide for the community, there arose LooLoo's Coffee Shack. It could even be said to be the only reason many of the residents in Macmasters get out of bed with a spring in their step in the morning. Similar to Looloo's Coffee Warehouse, the Shack has a fiercely strong community where relationships have been built over the shared love of coffee.

There's a solid customer base and plenty of regulars dropping by, what makes LooLoo's different from other cafes?

I guess we are different from other cafes because conversation and connection are just as important as serving superb coffee to customers. We remember names and coffee orders quicker than it takes to make the coffee. We want to know what you've done with your day, what you do for work, what you think of our jokes, or what you think the greatest Bob Dylan song is. We want customers to know that their support is really valued. We get up in the morning excited to catch up with our customers. We love them just as much as we love the first sip of our coffee in the morning.

Your coffee is unique to LooLoo's, can you tell us about your LooLoo's blend?

Instaurator is all about coffee. And he knows what it takes to make a good bag of beans. He has been a specialty coffee roaster for 35 years and has helped to establish roasting businesses in Vancouver Canada, Tokyo Japan, Seoul Korea, London and in Melbourne and Sydney Australia. He founded Espressoology – our roastery - to help Australians enable and grow their coffee dreams. The roastery is where the magic happens and is where our special and unique LooLoo's blend is created.

You can tell from the first sip of our coffee that it's different, it's good, it's tasty. It's a dark roast, so the flavour comes through well with a variety of milks, but also black too. Many roasters these days opt for lighter roasts, but we like a rich, full-bodied flavour that really comes through with our darker roasted blend (if that doesn't tickle your fancy, then we do serve lighter single origin beans). Our coffee leaves quite an impression on you and can't be matched, and by ordering online, people all over Australia are using our blend to make coffee at home. It's really easy to work with, and with Instaurator's expertise and the great roastery team, it's very consistent. Our blend is just the best. Oh, and it's really affordable! Only \$29.95 per kilo!

There's some tasty treats on offer, do you work with any local suppliers?

We most certainly do, all our treats are local! I could talk for hours about our products and the hands behind their creation.

Most famous are our homemade toasties, where the bread, butter, ham, tomatoes, cheese, and secret chutney are all Australian made and owned. We once had a staff member eat 6 toasties in one day – they are just that good!

We sell handmade gingerbread from the wonderful [Adri's Gingerbread](#), we've got Cruffins (croissant cross muffin hybrids) from [Ludo's](#) in Avoca, treats like the classic Date Chews made by LooLoo herself, gluten-free cookies and vegan raw balls made by some of our staff members, we've got local honey from the bees flying around you... Man, don't get me started on the other stuff!



It's been over a year now that businesses have been faced with changing restrictions, how has LooLoo's adapted to the COVID-19 changes?

COVID-19 was hard at first. It's scary not knowing what's going to happen and what it's like to work out in public when things seem to be so dire across the country. It was heartbreaking not being able to sit and drink your coffee in a mug, and instead of having to take it away from social interactions in a takeaway cup.

We could clearly see some customers were really struggling in these times, so it was nice to be able to become the joy in their day outside of the home when they came in for a coffee.

With all the waste generated when it was restricted to takeaway only, we very quickly established a composting system for all of our takeaway products. The coffee cups, lids, food trays, wooden cutlery, napkins, milkshake cups and toastie crusts can be composted and diverted from the general waste bin. LooLoo's has invested in a dedicated Remondis compost pick-up bin service. So all the packaging left at our stores goes directly to the compost station. The council doesn't pay for this - LooLoo's pays extra to make sure it happens.

Additionally, we established a swap and go system for those who really didn't want to participate in the use of paper, single-use cups. With the swap and go system, customers are able to buy a beautiful recycled, reusable cup, have a free coffee and then join in on the cycle of bringing it back dirty, and swapping it out for a commercial dishwasher-clean-cup that we have ready and waiting to go. I think between the two cafes there must be at least 200 customers in the program. So over the past year, these customers who come every day and have chosen to join the program and avoid single-use cups, means we have saved tens of thousands of coffee cups and lids going into landfill.

As these new systems and procedures in the café from COVID-19 have become our new norm in 2021, we feel more equipped and resilient against the unexpected lockdowns that occur every few months it seems. It means when the time comes to be able to sit down and have a coffee with customers at the table, without a mask, we will savour the special moment a little more.

How else can people enjoy the taste of LooLoos?

If you want to try our beans, check out our online store loloos.com.au/shop we can ship LooLoo's Private Blend to your front door at the same affordable (great) price that you can get it in-store.



FIND OUT MORE

Instagram: @lolooscoffeewarehouse
@lolooscoffeeshack



Regional
Development
Australia