

Local Food Innovators: SIPPS Margaritas



Best mates and local entrepreneurs **Alice Cannan** and **Jessica Hall** understand the value of a **special moment shared over a cocktail** between friends. It's this experience that led them to jump in the deep end, launching their own **Margarita mixer label, SIPPS**, right here on the Coast in November last year. Already distributing to stockists across Australia, we sat down with Alice to find out **what is making SIPPS such a phenomenon**.



From sharing Margaritas to manufacturing quality cocktail mixers. Congratulations on your success so far and can you tell us what inspired you to make the leap?

Thank you! Jess and I have spent many years traveling, wining, dining and working together and we saw a gap in the mixer market and decided to go for it!

Our philosophy is clean, simple, pure. We only use three ingredients so that it tastes as fresh as you would make yourself.

We love your thinking! We're also guessing this is what is making you so popular with customers near and far?

People do tell us they love our all-natural product, as well as our fun branding – perfect for a party or fun times with friends. People like the fact they can create a 'bar quality' cocktail at home that's tasty and fresh and as simple as pour, shake, sip.

It sounds like you're bringing a fresh approach to the beverage industry. Can you tell us more about how you're innovating this space?

Our mixers are innovating this industry by bringing a 'better for you' alternative into the world of pre-mix cocktails. It's rare to see a bottled product with a stable shelf life that is completely preservative and additive free.

Even in our very early days working with a food technology team to create our product; we really had to fight to keep our label clean.

It's definitely not the 'done thing' in the beverage industry. It involves greater quality control and more expensive ingredients to achieve, but we absolutely think it's worth it.



We couldn't agree more. Are you working with any other suppliers or producers who share your philosophy?

We get our lime juice from **EastCoast Beverages**, so we know they are always local, fresh and delicious. As well as selling online, we also have local stockists including **Plain Janes** and **Bam Vino**, plus several smaller retailers around the Coast.

We started off working with manufacturers in Sydney, but they were too big and didn't allow for the levels of quality control we expected, and their care factor was low.

Then we started working with Somersby manufacturers and small family business, **Vegetali**, and it has made such a massive difference.

By working with local manufacturers, we can produce small batch quantities and get to be much more involved in all aspects of the process.

Businesses in the food and beverage sector have faced numerous challenges over the past few years. What has been your biggest challenge so far?

Manufacturing has been our biggest hurdle to date. Before we started working with **Vegetali**, we lost a lot of product in one of our first large production runs.

This really put us on the back foot but may have been a blessing in disguise, as it caused us to look into smaller manufacturing companies and that's how we ended up working with **Vegetali**, who have been amazing.

We're really happy with where we are now but it was unfortunate that we had to get there the hard way.

What helped you overcome this challenge?

Sticking to who we are as people and as a brand has helped us overcome our biggest challenges so far.

As soon as we met Rob and the team at **Vegetali**, we instantly felt that they aligned with our core values, much more than our previous manufacturers had.

Knowing what you value as a brand and following through with that on every level of your business is extremely important.

It's also great to be working with another local business and growing together.



Let's talk about growth. What would support you the most to grow your business even more over the next two years?

Grant funding and publicity are two factors that would greatly enhance our growth and continuing development.

As a new business in an ever-changing market there is always growth opportunities; however, the financial resources that we have is often the limiting factor, especially in the alcoholic beverage industry when you are competing with big budgets and very established companies.

Despite its challenges, there has been a lot of growth and innovation in the Central Coast food and beverage scene in recent years. What do you hope this will look like in another five years?

We would love to see more businesses move from small to bigger scale.

It would be amazing to see businesses that have started out in the last five years grow and expand, because as businesses thrive it opens up more jobs and partnering opportunities to other related businesses.

Seeing more B2B businesses become established in the food and bev scene would be great too, bringing industries like manufacturing, production and marketing from Sydney to the Central Coast would really expand the possibilities and opportunities in this sector for everyone.

Growing an ecosystem for the food and beverage industry here on the Coast is definitely something we'd love to see too. What else do you love about working in this sector?

We love that more and more businesses are popping up on the Coast, especially in the alcoholic beverage industry. Boutique wine shops, micro-breweries, bars and so much more.

They all feed off each other and create a buzz that is good for all of us!



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