

# Local Entrepreneurs Series: Soul Vodka



In our **'Local Entrepreneurs Series'**, we shine a spotlight on the talented, skilled and innovative individuals who call the Central Coast home.

Owner and founder of **Soul Vodka**, **Laura Maric**, is a born and bred Coastie local who turned a passion for distilling into a family business selling **handcrafted, small batch vodka**.

**Loved by celebrities and made using local ingredients**, Soul Vodka is yet another Central Coast success story.

Here, we chat to Laura about how she's **conquering the spirit world** (while still **keeping it eco-friendly!**)



**Great to talk to you, Laura. We'd love to find out a little bit more about the people and passion behind your business. What led you to start Soul Vodka?**

Soul Vodka is a family owned business that has been operating on the Central Coast for almost three years. What started off as a hobby in 2010 soon turned into a passion for the craft of distilling and finessing. After a lot of research, we decided to go all in!

I had always pictured myself being a business owner and what better way to do it than with something you love?

**Your product is handcrafted using Australian wheat and other locally sourced ingredients. How important is it for you to keep it local in this way?**

'Locals supporting locals' is a saying that has come to mean so much for me.

Not only do we purchase 100 per cent of our ingredients from Australia, we also do everything we can to benefit our local customers: doing all deliveries between Sydney and Newcastle for free, sponsoring events, donating prize packs and promoting social media posts.

Getting to regularly meet our customers face-to-face has built some great working relationships, and it's such a good feeling when you can sit back, have a chat, and you don't feel like you're doing 'just another delivery'.

**Your products are bottled in glass that's made from recycled materials, and during your distilling process, all of the cooling water is reused in a close-circuit chilling system.**

**What other sustainability practices are you prioritising at the moment?**

That's right, the closed circuit system means zero water is used each time we run the still. This saves thousands of litres of water per day.



Some other ways we are practicing and prioritising sustainability include carrying all of our deliveries in reusable crates, and making our bottles from recycled glass. The lid is also made from polished metal, so they will last through dozens of uses and cleaning cycles.

The 'heads' cut [the first part of the collected alcohol] is used for cleaning and sterilising, instead of going to waste, and all of our waste is also removed and taken to the correct organic waste treatment facility. Lastly, fermenting is done in an insulated room to remove the need for heating.

**For some of your wholesale customers, such as local bars and restaurants, you even offer a bottle refill program. That's pretty innovative! Can you tell us a little bit more about it?**

Yes, it's an initiative that we started after we launched our one litre bottles. We believe our custom-made bottles are too beautiful to simply throw away after one use, so we introduced the bottle refill program to all of our licenced venues.

They keep all of their empty bottles for us to collect, clean, sanitise, refill and deliver on their next order. This way, nothing goes to waste!

**The London Spirits Competition identifies the world's best spirits, and in 2023, your product won a silver medal.**

**You were up against about 2,000 spirit brands from more than 80 countries. How did it feel to be recognised by the judging panel in such a prestigious competition?**

It was a huge honour for us to be recognised and awarded silver up against so many well known and prestigious brands - not just in Australia, but worldwide!

**Your vodka was also chosen to be served to guests at Aussie radio host Kyle Sandilands' lavish wedding. What did this exposure to potential new customers mean to you?**

When I received the phone call asking if we could supply the wedding, I was blown away with excitement. Not only did it broaden our exposure to new customers in Sydney and the surrounding areas, it was also a huge opportunity for us to show a bigger demographic how great our product is!





**Celebrity weddings aside, what are some of the other recent achievements or highlights that stand out to you?**

A big highlight was being approached to sponsor the 2023 NSW Tourism Awards, which was an amazing night.

Something else we have been doing lately is providing prize packs and merchandise for raffles, charity events and local game nights; we love getting behind local events and being able to donate when we can.

**You're stocked in some of the Coast's favourite licensed venues and liquor shops. What does this local love mean for your business?**

I can't express my gratitude enough for those first few businesses that took a chance on us when we were a new start up that no one had heard of, with no references. I was just some nervous new business owner on their doorstep with a smile and a shiny bottle for them to sample.

Our region has such a great sense of community and the support from our local customers is a reflection of that.

**Here on the Central Coast, we're seeing a real groundswell of visionary, entrepreneurial individuals who are backing themselves and their ideas, and bringing their unique products to life. What additional government support do you think would be beneficial when starting a new business?**

A business such as ours requires licensing up to six months prior to even starting your operations, which is a huge outlay of finances with no returns. A grace period for this on rent or outgoings would be a huge kickstart to getting off the ground.

**And finally, can you tell us your favourite thing about living and working on the Coast?**

We are born and raised on the Central Coast and have always called it home. The laid-back lifestyle and beautiful beaches will keep us here until we are old and grey!

## FIND OUT MORE

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