

# Lorna Scott adds female fynbos flair to SA's gin segment

Lorna Scott, a driving force behind South Africa's craft gin revolution, had never worked in a distillery before or had any experience in the liquor industry, when she launched Inverroche Gin in 2012 in Still Bay with her son Rohan and daughter Lauren.



“My background includes marketing and as deputy-mayor of the Hessequa Municipality, where I became involved in sustainable development. I believe that if you have a passion for something, which in my case is telling a story by making gin, then you can achieve anything if you put your mind and hard work to it. And you can have a career change in your mid-50s.”

## Symbiotic with the environment

Scott was the first to infuse gin with fynbos, creating a new category in the local and international liquor industry. Her passion for sustainability has led to a successful eco-friendly business where 70% of the staff is women employed from the local community and the entire gin-making process, from distillation to bottle, is symbiotic with the environment.

“From the start it was never just about the gin. I wanted to create a product that would tell a story and the fynbos was the inspiration. There are world-renowned archaeological sites close to our distillery with traces from hundreds of thousands of years ago of how man survived on what the ocean and plant life naturally provided. Our gins represent the story of sustainability, of heritage and of mankind that is unique to the southern coastal region and Africa as a continent. For us, it is bringing back the awareness of the responsibility to nurture and respect this wonderful heritage and the environment.”

Scott started experimenting in 2007 using a small 1.7 litre copper pot still, christened Mini-Meg, distilling her way through various different fynbos species to develop her recipes.

“Distilling is definitely in my blood even though I never planned to make it a career. My mother used to distil pineapple beer in her pressure cooker! The small copper pot still brought back many fond memories of her and when I discovered it on a trip to Italy I was immediately drawn to it.”



## Fynbos diversity

Scott spent much time understanding fynbos and over the years narrowed the selection down to just over 35 species. “We soon realised that one gin was not going to be enough to showcase the enormous diversity and richness of this unique biomes found nowhere else in the world but here. So the three gins were born, each with their own distinctive taste and colour profile.”

Each gin is infused with a different combination of fynbos:

- Inverroche Classic is infused with fynbos harvested from the limestone-rich hills and cliffs
- Inverroche Gin Verdant with fynbos selected from the mountainous, rocky terrain
- Inverroche Amber from fynbos scattered along the dunes

Today the gins are distilled in a custom-made 1,000-litre wood-fired copper pot still, named Magnanimous Meg, in fond remembrance of the small copper still, which ignited the start of Inverroche. The spirits are double or triple distilled in small batches and each distillation coaxes the aromatic oils, aromas and flavours from the flowers, berries, roots and citrus suspended in custom-made baskets beneath the helm of the still. The gins are all bottled, labelled and numbered by hand.

Scott’s commitment to the environment extends to the entire gin-making process. The distillery pumps water from the ground the old-fashioned way, they return used botanical material as compost to the soil, fire the pot still with alien vegetation, harvest the fynbos in such a way to encourage re-growth and use waste-material to create bricks.

“From the outset we aimed to create an artisanal and premium spirit, distilled in small batches in copper pots. Small batch craft gins represent a return to personal attention, to quality and taste. Craft distilling is about choice and individuality, handmade authenticity, independence and innovation.”



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### Fresh female perspective

Scott sees her range of gins as a unique opportunity to bring a new dynamic to the liquor industry. Distilling a spirit in a traditionally male dominated industry has certainly not held her back.

“I believe that women bring a fresh perspective to the industry and also to entrepreneurship in general. We don’t only find success whilst providing for our families but also contribute through our accomplishments positively to the upliftment of communities.”

Scott’s advice to aspiring entrepreneurs is to learn everything you can about your chosen industry to ensure you have the confidence and insight to make calculated decisions.

“Surround yourself with people who are experts in their respective fields and who can assist you to shape your idea and help you to get your idea off the ground. It is impossible to start and run a business on your own. Make sure you have a team that share the same vision as you and who can motivate you during the tough times,” concludes Scott.

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