

# **DRINK** NEW ZEALAND *tech*



**JUNO GIN**  
UNDER THE MOUNTAIN

**COFFEE**  
OF THE FUTURE  
**MERGER OF**  
**PIONEER WINE**

## UNDER THE MOUNTAIN

Many unique things can be found under Mt Taranaki...but up until now, it's tended to be (or related to) milk, oil, gas or great surf breaks. Now the region – recently voted the world's second-best place to visit by Lonely Planet - can add gin to its list of achievements, thanks to the newly released London-style Juno Gin by a locally-bred husband-and-wife team.



The handiwork of Jo and Dave James – who describe themselves as an “unassuming” couple who met at primary school – Juno Gin has now hit the market just two years after the James’ left their respective careers and combined their science backgrounds and passion for gin to start dreaming and experimenting to craft their ideal tippie. “I love gin,” Jo – who worked in the public health sector, including as executive director of a drug and alcohol counselling service consortium in Australia - says. “It’s been a favourite drink of mine since I was a teenager and I’ve always

loved to cook. So what we’re doing with Juno is like a recipe for happiness—we’re able to play with flavour and create a product that I genuinely love.” Flavour profiling and distilling technique experimentation began on their kitchen bench using a two-litre copper still, which they affectionately christened ‘Willy’. As they refined the Juno recipe, a 10-litre still called ‘Jenny’ took their labour of love to the next level and eventually, Dave put his engineering background to work by designing from scratch a 400-litre still called ‘Lila’, built collaboratively with the Taranaki engineering firm Rivet.

Today ‘Lila’ can produce a breathtaking 450 700ml bottles of gin per day and, with word spreading about this Taranaki gem of gins, the James say it won’t be long before the still is working at full capacity as well. That demand was given a boost at the recent Auckland Food Show with attendees (including celebrity chefs) admiring Juno’s uniquely citrus, floral and aromatic notes—flavours that the James explain are distinctly Kiwi. The company sources almost all of its botanicals (the plants used to flavour the alcohol) locally. “Our Orris Root comes from Hawke’s Bay,” Dave says, “cori-



"For example, our juniper is sent to a local chocolatier to be used in making chocolate truffles." The James are keen to promote a different kind of drinking culture by considering how spirits are packaged, and will offer their gin in 200ml and 700ml bottles so drinkers have a choice of volume. The 200ml product can also offer seasonal flavours so gin aficionados can try something different from the endless variety of flavours. The James have three core business values – make it fun,

make it together and make it right – which come from their experience working in the food industry. Sustainability is important to both of them, and making it right first time ticks all their boxes, Dave says. The couple have funding from the central government research and development arm Callaghan Institute, and are working with Massey University researchers looking at botanical suppliers.

[www.junogin.co.nz](http://www.junogin.co.nz)

ander seed from the Wairarapa, we use Taranaki mountain water from Stratford, a citrus orchard is being established here in Taranaki and we work with a limery on the East Coast." A grower in Oakura supplies licorice root and angelica, and Jo is currently obsessed with bergamot orange, which they happened on by chance from a vacuum cleaner salesman who had a tree growing in his back garden. Juno also produces limited edition seasonal gins that are developed from hand-selected local ingredients harvested at the peak of perfection. "We are even talking with local horti-

culturalists and iwi to possibly grow juniper (the main flavour used to create gin) as a commercial crop," Jo says. "We're applying for funding now to do the first crop trials." As a former conservation consultant, the idea of introducing a new environmentally sustainable crop to New Zealand's horticultural landscape excites Dave. "Sustainability is one of our core values. We use rainwater from our roof for cooling processes, we use extremely efficient heating techniques and we've developed a capacity to re-use our botanicals rather than discard them.

