

Shining the light on Justin Turner from Turner Stillhouse, by Collins SBA



Justin Turner owns and runs a company many can only dream of: Turner Stillhouse, Tasmanian craft spirits distillery. In short, Justin is living out his dream of crafting spirits and has just launched a new gin called 'Three Cuts Gin'. Justin has a fascinating life story, and he shares some of it with us in this short article. Thank you, Justin, and we wish you well with your new venture.

1. When people ask, 'What do you do?', what do you say?

I get asked this frequently as an American living in Tasmania. I tell people that I am the founder of a new craft spirits distillery outside Launceston producing whisky and gin. I tell people that I am finally fulfilling my passion.

2. Having worked on Wall Street in what we can only imagine is a highly stressful environment, how does it feel to be part of this part of the world, doing something that not only brings joy to you but to others too?

I feel that I've returned to my roots, albeit it in a foreign country. Although I spent many years in New York City, I was raised in rural parts of Northern California where my family owned a winery, and I spent summers working in vineyards. My wife is from Tasmania (we met in New York) and comes from a multi-generational farming family. It feels extremely comfortable to me here, and I'm loving what I am doing and becoming part of the community as part of this process.

3. Congratulations on the very recent launch of your first gin, Three Cuts Gin – what's behind the name?

The goal in any brand is to create a name that is memorable but also ties to a real-world story. In our case we distilled various roses into our gin, including some local Tamar Valley roses, so we highlighted this with "three cuts of rose" on the label, which became Three Cuts Gin.

4. How does a business like yours, an independent distillery, market itself? How do you let people know, for example, that you've literally just launched a new Gin?

In part from newsletters like this one, but also a more significant strategic marketing plan. We are building momentum organically on a local level and via informal social media at the moment (we just launched a few weeks ago). We have also started working with a highly respected marketing firm in Launceston, S-Group, on a more formal launch for our gin. We are targeting end of February for this launch in both print and digital marketing so stay tuned.

5. How long does it take to create a Gin versus a Whisky? How would you describe the taste of each?

Gin should be rested at least one month if not longer, but whisky between 2 and 10+ years depending on the type of whisky. We also plan to introduce some other craft spirits outside of these categories that will offer customers a wide variety. The taste of each spirit can be highly personal, but I would describe the taste of gin as generally juniper forward with other complementary botanicals (a refreshing white spirit over ice or with tonic/soda). The flavour of whisky depends on factors such as the type of the grain utilised (e.g. barley, corn or rye) along with the type of barrel and length of time the product is aged.

6. Technology seems to have made a dent in all industries; how has it impacted the world of distilleries?

The beauty of craft distilling is that there is no perfect answer. We see distilleries utilising the latest technology and those that do it entirely by feel as they would have hundreds of years ago. I'm a believer in a hybrid approach – we utilise modern stills with sensors for data and temperature monitoring, but we ultimately distil by taste in each production run and not by a computer.

7. One of your business goals is to become one of Australia's biggest Whisky distillers. That's a great goal – what will it take to achieve that? How will you know you have reached that?

We believe that we have raised sufficient funding and have the proper team and business plan to accomplish our goals. We will know we have arrived when we become a household name and are respected for having produced a super-premium product at a sensible price point appreciated by our loyal consumers.

8. Growing up your family owned a winery; you must have been pretty cool at school?

Yes, we had field trips to the winery when I was younger. I look back very favourably on those times that set in place the foundation for what I am doing today.

9. How important is it that you have the right professionals working with you to grow your business?

Extremely important. I am lucky to have trusted advisors outside of the company, including Collins SBA, and internally have hired a local ex-brewer who is my co-distiller and integral to our operations. I also have an amazing advisory board of both well-respected CEOs and local industry experts whom I call upon regularly for advice and input.

10. What makes you smile at work?

I'm so lucky to live my dream and do this every day. Seeing someone drink our spirits and smile because they appreciate our product is extremely rewarding.

11. Coming from the US to Tasmania, you must have noticed a few differences in the way in which we do business. What have been the main differences?

One thing I've noticed is that competitors can be more friendly here than in the U.S. and willing to lend advice or a helping hand – it's refreshing.

12. Customer expectations are always rising; we always want more! How will you ensure that Turner Stillhouse will not only meet but exceed customer expectations?

We stand behind every drop of spirit produced as being of consistently high quality – not every distiller can say that. I pride myself on communicating quickly and forming connections personally with our consumers. If we ever encounter an issue, I will be the first to call the consumer to discuss and address the matter.

One of our unique differentiators is that we are co-located at the Tamar Ridge Cellar Door just outside Launceston. We secured a long-term lease to occupy the former winery at Tamar Ridge and are renovating it the next five months to a best in class visitor experience for distillery tours and tastings. Adjacent to our distillery is the existing Tamar Ridge Cellar Door, where visitors may taste wine from Brown Family Wine Group, and where we currently offer our gin for tastings and sales. Combined we represent a unique opportunity for guests to sample both spirits and wine at the same location.

You can follow Justin's progress on Instagram, Turner Stillhouse or by visiting the website, [click here](#).

