

Epicurean

Still waters

Distiller Jill Mulvaney grew up on a farm in Central Hawkes Bay.

I crash landed on Waiheke as many Waihek-eans do after a major life change. It has been a place of healing and transformation for me and my family over the years.

I’m the founder and director of Alembics NZ and The Alembics Lab. We work out of what used to be the Old Blackpool General Store on Moa Ave (currently getting a renovation). I am a distiller and aromaticist (meaning I work with natural flavour and aroma) and I’ve worked with plants for over 25 years. I fell in love with copper stills when I was given a tiny still as a gift many years ago, and once I found out what they could do—the alchemy of the process – I was hooked and needed to know more. So my partner Charlie and I went to Portugal on the way to visit his family in the UK, and visited a factory on the Duro. Their stills (along with Adriano and his family who make them) have become a really important part of my life . We came back from Porto and in August 2010 our first shipment of stills arrived in New Zealand. We started Alembics in to import and sell these copper stills and other high-quality distilling equipment in New Zealand. You can often see them shining in the sunlight when you visit, or walk past the Lab on Moa.

Teaching people how to use these stills became a really large part of my job (and



Jill Mulvaney, the founder and director of Alembics New Zealand, is based at Moa Ave in Blackpool.

one I really enjoyed). I’ve been teaching distillation workshops for over 15 years now, and when Covid hit, we decided to put these workshops online. So The Alembics

Lab, our teaching and consulting business, was born. All our classic workshops are now online and filmed by talented local filmmaker Rowena Baines and all the content and copy is written by Jess Culpán. Charlie has since retired and I am now running both businesses with a great team of young and enthusiastic people.

New Zealand has such a rich distillation tradition, which has just exploded in the last few decades, since home distilling was fully legalised here in 1996. New Zealand is one of the few countries where you can distil your own alcohol (as long as you don’t sell it) and that’s led to so much innovation and invention. It’s a great space to work in.

Each day working at The Alembics Lab can be quite different, it depends on what is on the calendar. It could be a product development consultation for individuals or companies (I work with businesses in the distilling, cosmetic and food and beverage industries). Sometimes it will be helping people formulate recipes for gins, aromatic spirits, zero ABV drinks, or working with

natural flavour and aroma in foods or perfumes. People come to me with all manner of projects, and I love the variety.

Or I could be setting up a distillation (or three) with my team to investigate the aromatic properties of some of our native species. I love working with plants, and connecting with the environment around me. Often I will take a walk through the bush here on the island, and there will be a species that just seems to jump out at me, to be calling to me and sparking my curiosity, and I know I’ll need to investigate it further. I love experimentation, and trying to find new and sustainable ways to use aroma and flavour.

I’m currently studying with an American herbalist Lisa Ganora who has studied pharmacognosy and phytochemistry. I’m going to teach in Washington State in June, and am treating myself to an in-person course held in a small town in Colorado called Paonia, which is near Montrose. The course is on making herbal honey elixirs and herbal mead.



Eat your citrus peels, says Jill. “They are full of antioxidants, vitamins and terpenes. So when you have your next martini – eat the peel.”

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Aromatic plants like basil and mint can be used to make hydrosols.

They are full of antioxidants, vitamins and terpenes. So when you have your next martini – eat the peel!

Biggest culinary disaster. I was making a casserole for my family in my brother’s beach house from some wild venison he had recently bought in. Being a beach house, liquids were sometimes in mis-matched vessels, and what I thought was cooking oil was actually dishwashing detergent, so we had a frothy venison stew. It wasn’t until we did the dishes that I realized and had to confess. I think some wine may have helped and nobody seemed to notice.

If I could pass on one tip about the preparation of food: Forget the packets and stick to the real thing. If you can’t get it, take a moment to think what it adds to the dish, and what you could replace it with, that you can get locally or just outside.

Botanical Martini

A pre-dinner drink can be such an important part of our ritual of relaxing and transitioning from a busy day to slowing down and engaging with our senses.

I do love a martini – but this martini’s a bit left of Hemingway’s traditional drink. Zero alcohol (by volume) drinks are increasingly popular, and becoming increasingly sophisticated. I love working in this space. So here’s my recipe.

- 6 limes
- 1 cup organic sugar
- Handful of fresh mint or fresh rosemary leaves – whichever is in season
- Pinch of fennel seeds
- Kelp salt



Jill makes one of her botanical cocktails, which includes a basil hydrosol.



The finished Botanical Martini.

- Basil hydrosol (I make my own, and you can too)
- Botanical vermouth (recipe below)
- Ice
- Fat green olives and citrus peel to garnish

The botanical spirit (basil hydrosol)

I make hydrosols, which are the aromatic waters from my still. They make an excellent base for delicious non-alcoholic cock-

tails such as these. This year I grew several varieties of basil and I cut them back and hydro-distilled them. Hydro distilling is easy, and you can learn how to do it in our online courses if you’re interested, just visit The Alembics Lab website www.thealembicslab.com (direct link is) <https://thealembicslab.com/courses/distilling-hydrosol/>

The botanical vermouth (herbal citrus syrup)

Lillet (blanc or rose) is my favourite vermouth. I make a take on it like this:

- Peel 6 limes and place the peel in a mortar and pestle (or blender).
- Add 1 cup of organic sugar
- Bash with your pestle (or blend) until the zest is running into the sugar
- Now add a handful of fresh mint, or if not in season a spoonful of rosemary leaves
- Bash again
- Add a few fennel seeds and a good pinch of kelp salt and bash again.
- Juice your limes – add and mix
- Leave overnight in the fridge.
- The next morning, strain through a fine strainer and check the taste. You are aiming for a sharp citrus sour, with sweet, herbal and salty minerality. If too sweet, add more lime juice, if too tart add some sugar syrup.
- The acid of the lime zest and juice melts the sugar, and it becomes a thick concentrated syrup. You can add a little water to make it a smoother consistency if you like. Because it hasn’t had any heat applied, it tastes fresh and zingy and all those vitamins stay intact. It’s rich in antioxidants and limonene – a terpene present in the citrus peels of fruit.

To make the martini

- Put the martini glasses in the freezer to chill
- Fill a shaker or beaker with ice
- Pour on 30ml of hydrosol and 50ml of the herbal citrus ‘vermouth’ per person.
- Take the chilled glasses out of the freezer
- Place two green olives in the glass with a twist of lime or lemon peel
- Stir, shake or muddle the martini mix and pour through a sieve into the glass.
- Enjoy – and don’t forget to eat the peel. •

Love Oneroa

Seaside village charm, irresistible style and taste

Discover our delights

Oneroa is a ‘must-do’ experience to file in your memory bank of Waiheke – it offers a diverse range of shops, cafes & galleries encapsulating the Waiheke vibe. Make sure you wander down the byways to find the hidden gems that our village holds.

–Love Oneroa



Shop the Rock

It’s all in the name – The Rock is what locals call Waiheke and this shop of the same name is proudly owned and operated by Sue and has been based in Oneroa Village for over 23 years. If you are after Waiheke products, souvenirs, beach wear, clothing, gifts and much more then Sue’s shop is the perfect stop. She prides herself on variety and affordability, affording you a fun shop for the perfect gift, drop of local honey for the neighbour, beach towel for the kids or a Waiheke Island cap for off-island family and friends. You won’t be disappointed after your visit to Shop The Rock.



Oyster Inn

The Oyster Inn is hosting an exclusive wine dinner with Poppies Martinborough. Embark on a culinary journey guided by Josh Emmett and acclaimed winemaker Poppy Hammond as you feast on a 4-course menu that harmoniously combines the finest seasonal ingredients with Poppies exceptional wines. Here is your exclusive opportunity to try these wines outside of Martinborough. Josh and Poppy will guide you through each course, sharing insights into the thoughtfully chosen wines that match with each course.
EVENT DETAILS:
Date: Thursday 22nd June, Time: 6:30 pm – 9:30pm, Price: \$195 per person. Where: The Oyster Inn – 4-course dinner with 5 wine pairings curated by Josh Emmett and Head Chef Valentina Adornato. Visit: theoysterinn.co.nz or call 09-372 2222 to purchase your tickets.



Thirsty Liquor

If you’re looking for a favourite drink to enjoy or something new that takes your fancy, then head to your local Thirsty Liquor at the top of the village and you’ll find plenty to choose from their extensive local, national & international range. Even better be sure to check out the premium spirit brands on special. Thirsty Liquor, one-stop-shop for all your liquor needs. Looking after locals since 2017. With a wide range of beers, wine, spirits and RTD’s, also offer sharp pricing on bulk buying too. #Drinkresponsibly Thirsty Liquor Top of the village Open 7 days

I'm also a founding member of Project Reachout Waiheke. The primary purpose of which is to reduce social isolation of those in our community who experience mental health issues.

A favourite food memory: my grandmother would often join us for Sunday lunch. She and I would go out into my mother's large vegetable garden and pick peas. We would sit together, pod peas and chat – ready for the traditional farm-kill roast lamb lunch, with fresh peas and mint from the garden, roast potatoes, golden kumara, and pumpkin. There always had to be a white, yellow and green vegetable on the plate. The roast came out of the oven and was transferred to a large oval meat plate (which I still have). The fat was poured off into a large tin of dripping. The roasting dish went back on the element to sizzle and a spoonful of flour stirred in until it became a sticky, sizzling, deliciously warm and inviting mess. Next the water from the cooked vegetables was added with some salt and hence the magic of gravy was made.

My father with great aplomb and ceremony would carve the lamb and my mother served the vegetables and I would put the plates on the table. My grandmother had a very large bosom and had her napkin tucked into the neckline of her dress.

I learnt to cook as a very young child as there was so much of it to do. Every day, breakfast, smoko, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner was prepared from scratch. Not just for the family, but the hay contractors, stock agents, rabbiters, shearers and the swag men who dropped in with their empty billies. It wasn't until I was a teenager that I have any memory of processed food or takeaways. By the time I was 12, I could prepare a roast dinner that my father thought was acceptable.

My grandmother and mother were both accomplished gardeners and cooks. They could produce tasty, robust and healthy food on demand for a few or many. I lived in Perth, Western Australia for most of my adult life before I came to Waiheke. When I was in my 20s, young and travelling, I worked in hospo as you do to get by. I hated being a waitress and when I was working in a traditional French-style restaurant, I took any opportunity to watch the chefs make the sauces, dance with their copper pans on the flame, and pluck pheasants. One night the sous chef didn't turn up and the chef told me to get an apron on and do as I was told. I ended up working with him for a year and that changed the way I cooked forever.

These days, I'm particularly interested in food that supports healthy brain function. This has come about from my relationship with my son who is schizophrenic. The drugs that are prescribed have cruel side ef-



Rowena Baines films Jill for an Alembics Lab workshop.

fects and can be more damaging than the condition itself.

I read Julia Rucklidge's book *The Better Brain* – she is professor of clinical psychology at the University of Canterbury. She has a great Ted talk on nutrition for mental health with a focus on ADHD to depression. I then took her online course in nutrition for mental health.

I have incorporated her research into how we eat, encouraging our whole family to be more aware. This has improved my son's mental health and well-being and he has been able to significantly reduce the amount of medication without ill effect.

I'm a bit of a pain about not wanting to eat anything out of a packet. We all grow herbs and as much leafy greens as we can. I encourage eating the colours of the rainbow – they are used to bitter greens and bright orange nasturtium and dandelion flowers and unidentified objects in salads in particular. Violets are out now – they are a rich source of phytochemicals and antioxidants and are just gorgeously tasty and sweet.

My grandson is now 15 and has grown up with aromatic herbs and spices, pottering with me in the garden, cooking alongside me as a child and now he too is an ex-

cellent cook.

My go-to meal when I am short on time: a salad with all the colours of the rainbow, and with some protein – a soft boiled egg, or tinned tuna, or feta cheese or leftovers – if any. My budget meal: a tasty dahl.

What's next for me? Keeping on with my research and education. Designing and filming more courses for The Alembics Lab. We teach both aromatic and alcohol distillation, with current online courses showing people how to make their own essential oils, hydrosols and spirits. We also have our most popular workshop already online, Gin Immersion, which is a practical course in gin-making. So our next step is teaching people how to make top-quality neutral spirit – the blank canvas for gin, and so many other aromatic spirits, as well as being useful to aromatic distillers, perfumists and herbalists as a base for tinctures and perfume. Then it's on to coloured spirits, then a whole raft of courses for the aromatic distillers including how to use hydrosols, making your own natural skin care products, perfumery and, well it's safe to say there is a lot in the works.

We do in-person workshops: I want to host some Waiheke workshops, so that may happen this summer. I'm also off to Spo-

kane, in Washington soon to teach alongside some amazing colleagues.

And personally, I continue with my work as a board member on Project Reach Out – working on making the lives of those with a mental illness and the families and friends an easier place to be.

If you would like to volunteer, make a donation or find out more about what we do www.projectreachoutwaiheke.co.nz

The Q & A:

Favourite island food cart: I love the falafels at the market, with tahini and salsa.

Earliest cooking memory: Podding peas with my grandmother and leaving the pods in her generous apron on her generous lap.

Most unusual thing you have eaten: I didn't eat it, but I did drink it in a gin bar in London – a very expensive truffle gin. I wouldn't bother with it again.

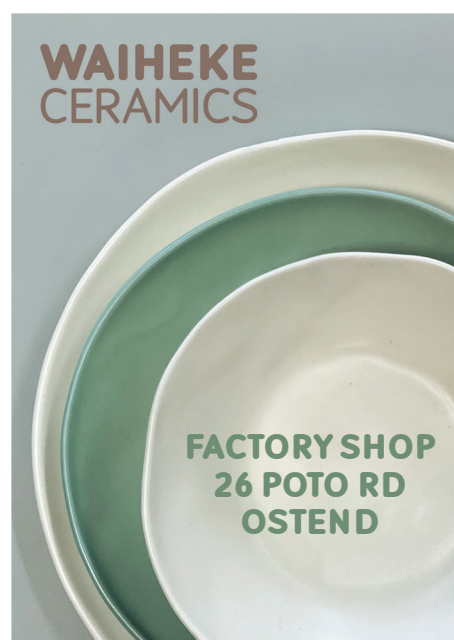
Favourite ingredient: Kelp salt. Because it's all New Zealand, from the sea and taste of the sea and salty minerality. Fresh parsley is definitely another one, not as a garnish, but lots of it.

Best local ingredient: Wine and olive oil – a marriage made in heaven.

Best-ever foodie tip: Eat your citrus peels.



Lime peel has a wide range of uses.



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