



THE *Cleanse* THAT Counts

This Dry January you may be laying off the drink, but that doesn't mean you can't still enjoy a tipples or two (alcohol-free, of course). NonToxicated is the Yorkshire-based drinks club that's championing independent alcohol-free options

Not satisfied with the lack of choice of alcohol-free alternatives in supermarkets, Leanne Waite and Lisa Godfrey set about creating a centralised hub for the sober who are seeking to expand their horizons with new and delicious options. Now with thousands of online followers, NonToxicated offers their customers an app for finding great new brands, as well as specially-curated subscription boxes. We catch up with Leanne to find out more.

What was the inspiration behind NonToxicated?

I dipped in and out of alcohol-free drinks while I was pregnant and breastfeeding. I had lots of social events and was seeking alcohol-free options but there weren't many on the market. I've always dabbled in alcohol-free drinks and class myself as a mindful drinker. During lockdown people were drinking far too much. Lisa's a big online shopper, so she went off to find some alcohol-free options for her that she could order and found that there wasn't really a central place to find all of these weird and wonderful alcohol-free drinks. There are loads of independents out there who obviously have a massive struggle getting things into supermarkets.

How did it come together?

One day we got our heads together and realised there was an opportunity, we can see that it's a growing market and we'd really like to help the community to discover these drinks. There's loads of sober Facebook groups and online communities out there but we didn't want to be that and we don't bang the sober drum. We just wanted to create a place where people could talk about drinks, share inspiration and what they weren't happy with in a constructive way. We first started with a Facebook group and we launched it just in time for Sober October 2020. We've got four years under our belts now and everything we've done has happened organically. Our members are worldwide, (predominantly in the UK) but we've got a large US following as well.

What has the change been like in the alcohol-free market?

Honestly it's so exciting. There's so many choices out there now. When I was pregnant and breastfeeding, the only thing that I could see to buy easily was Becks Blue and it's not very nice. I have bought it on the odd occasion when it's the only option, but now the choice of drinks is amazing. People are really starting to switch on to it, and even if I go on a night out in Leeds, I might order myself an alcohol-free gin or cocktail. Obviously it's been a rocky road for many of the brands because they've not got a massive budget, but they're passionate about what they do and it can be hard for them to get their products out there which is what we try to do. We help curious consumers connect with brilliant brands in the alcohol-free space.

Tell us about the subscription boxes.

In terms of how the subscription works, we always had an idea that for all of our community members it would be great to have a starter box. We've chosen some specific drinks that will be good for people starting out on that journey. One of the issues is

that customers will go buy a bottle of gin or a bottle of wine and if they don't really like it they'll probably still drink it. Whereas with alcohol-free options, if people buy something and don't like it then it's useless. So we're also trying to build trust for customers to take the plunge. We want to give the alcohol-free community a curated box that will start them on that journey.

They order one box and can receive it every month with different options in there. There are other boxes out there, but they're mostly things you have to make yourself. I like ready-to-drink things, I just want to go to a fridge on a Friday night and know that I've already got a kombucha chilled or an alcohol-free beer chilled. One of my favourite products (I would never drink it in its alcoholic form now) is a premixed whisky alternative with coke and that's the kind of thing I like. We wanted our box to be fuss-free.

Tell us about the changes in drinking culture you're seeing.

I personally think people like having options. They don't want to completely stop drinking, but don't want to go too hard at the work do or regret things the next day. What I do know is that the younger generation are not so into alcohol. I think the conversation around alcohol is massively changing and a new focus on health is something to do with it. There's not as much shame associated with it anymore either. My nearest city is Leeds and I always ended up driving to events, and I would be there with my soda and lime or a diet coke and people would say "why aren't you drinking?". Now I could order something alcohol-free and nobody would know or care – it makes it a lot more inclusive.

To find out more, visit nontoxicated.co.uk and for your chance to win a bespoke box of alcohol-free drinks, visit livingnorth.com.

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