

“I knew since I was a teenager that I would do what I am doing now”

LAURA BONNER

The Muff Liquor Company



After spending six years in London working in the property sector, Laura Bonner returned to her native Donegal to set up her business — The Muff Liquor Company.

In London, Laura had climbed the corporate ladder to become UK director for an Australian property company, but she would not have left Ireland were it not for the recession, and she always intended to return and set up the business she is running now.

“I knew since I was a teenager that I would do what I am doing now. I always knew I would own The Muff Liquor Company and produce Irish spirits, which is part of my family heritage,” she says. “Once I made a bit of money, I knew it was time to return home and follow my dream.”

Laura and her business partner Tom Russell established the company, which produces premium potato-based distilled spirits, in 2017. The Muff Liquor Company was inspired by Laura’s grandfather, Philip McClenaghan, who made poitin in his barn

– an illustration of Granda McClenaghan now adorns the back of each bottle they produce.

Their flagship product, Muff Irish Potato Craft Gin was launched in February 2018 and it was quickly followed by Muff Irish Potato Vodka in November that year. Muff Liquor Company products are now selling in multiple countries worldwide and a Muff Whiskey will be the next product to hit the shelves.

Using potatoes as a base rather than grain distinguishes The Muff Liquor Company from its competitors as does the fact that its drinks are distilled six times as opposed to the more common practice of five times for premium spirits. As the Muff range is not grain-based, the spirits are also gluten free and suitable for coeliacs.

Initially, Laura found starting afresh in Ireland challenging. “It was difficult at the beginning, mainly for personal reasons as my friends and a lot of my family were still abroad and my banking was still in the UK. I also needed a new driving licence, but

apart from those issues, the transition was fine,” she says.

She believes that access to funding for returning emigrants looking to start businesses in Ireland needs to be improved and the application processes need to be streamlined. “It has been the hardest obstacle for me,” she says. “I’ve wasted so much time with certain organisations, going through a lot of meetings and paperwork with no results.”

The Muff Liquor Company is currently crowdfunding to expand into Asia and Laura is moving to the region to oversee the expansion. The plan is to launch in Hong Kong and Australia next and to hire six new employees to help drive development.

In its short time in business, The Muff Liquor Company’s products have been recognised as Best in the Republic of Ireland 2019 in the UK Gin Guide awards, won gold at the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America 75th annual convention in 2018 and also won gold at the Gin World Masters – Asia in 2018.



POSITION

Founder and Managing Director

WHAT WE DO

We produce premium potato-based Irish spirits which we sell internationally.

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