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Let's Do Something Different

Susan Colby (/?author=579697c7e6f2e187da34c75a) · January 28, 2017  
(/blog/2017/1/27/lets-do-something-different)

## Two Lawyers Take on a Different Case



How did two successful young lawyers end up in a renovated warehouse, tending a couple of large stills (named Mildred and Maude named after their grandmothers) producing exceptional Hope on Hopkins (<http://hopeonhopkins.co.za/>) gins at the tip end of South Africa?

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9 For partners Lucy Beard and Leigh Lisk, it meant coming home from the UK, where they had spent years in the corporate world. When Leigh's job became untenable to him, and the miserable weather became too oppressive, they packed their bags, bought a classic Airstream trailer and took to the European roads for a year. It was while they were traveling, they pondered, "Do we need to go back (to London)?" Their decision? "Let's do something different!"

"In Morocco we thought, 'Let's buy a campsite; in Spain, it was let's buy a beach bar.' But then reality hit and we decided we want to come home." They returned with the intention of setting up a wine bar in Cape Town, did but found that one had just opened. So, they expanded their thinking.

## CAN WE DO THIS?



Lucy said that during their travels, "We had seen the rise of craft gin in Europe. We witnessed it in London. Little distilleries popping up." So they wondered, "Can we do this?"

"We downloaded a book on distilling whiskey to our Kindles and sat in a Spanish camp site and started to read." After deciding it was doable, they made the decision to pack up and head home. Once back in South Africa, they took distilling classes at Distillique, International Institute of Brewing and Distilling correspondence courses and an advanced brewing course "through guys who are just passionate brewers and that tapped us into that whole scene."

Lucy laughed, saying, "We literally didn't know much when we started."

## MOVING AHEAD





But armed with masses of information and training, they forged ahead, purchasing an old warehouse in the industrial Salt River area of Cape Town (<https://www.worldcraftdistilleries.com/blog/2017/1/11/pushing-the-gin-boundaries-in-western-cape>). "We bought it with the idea of living in it and it had the exact space we needed."

As with almost any renovation project, there were hiccups along the way, like workers' strikes and rainy, cold Cape winter weather intervened. But they persevered and the space is proving to be exactly what they envisioned.

With added skylights, the distillery floor is bright and spacious. The upstairs tasting room is expansive, open to the lower level. Lucy commented, "I had a vision of the tasting room overlooking the distillery floor." A bar made of fruit packing crates spans one wall and the graffiti-inspired logo takes up the entire wall behind it. Lucy and Leigh's living quarters are on this level as well.

## FAMILY

Both Lucy and Leigh's families were very taken aback with the new direction the couple had chosen. "Even when you are 45 years old and you tell your mother you are changing jobs, it doesn't go down very well," Leigh said. "You studied how many years to get that job, and now

you are going to do what?" And as his Mum is in the food and drink industry, she knows how fickle it can be.

Lucy said, "I don't think they (the parents) actually thought we were really going to do it." But now, she says "My mother is our greatest fan!"

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## PRODUCTION

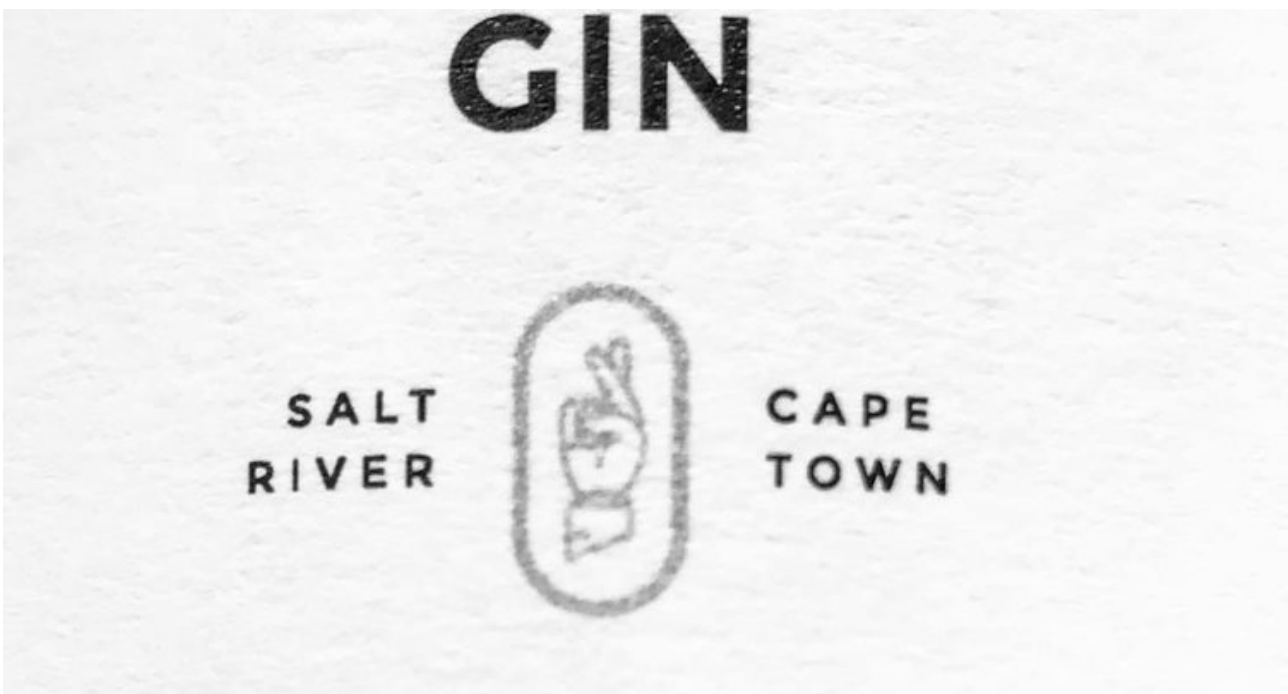
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Hope on Hopkins currently produces (<http://hopeonhopkins.co.za/spirits/>) three gins; London Dry Gin, Salt River Gin which are barley-based and the Mediterranean Gin has a grape spirit base. Playing on the location, Salt River Gin is a "contemporary style, bringing Western Cape flavors to the fore." The Mediterranean Gin, Leigh's favorite, is "an unusual, savory gin distilled with plenty of olives, orange peel and fresh herbs." They also produce a small batch Vodka and Esperanza, their version of Tequila. In a roundabout way, they have become contract distillers for Musgrave Gin (<http://www.musgravegin.co.za/>), so Mildred and Maude are kept busy.

- 9 The recipe development is Lucy's department. "I'm not very good at designing flavors at all," Leigh said. "Lucy has a knack for it. She is really, really good!" But Lucy claims that Esperanza is Leigh's creation, as he is a tequila-lover. Their next experiment and to expand their product line, is to create a vermouth.

## MARKETING ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Interestingly, their main marketing platform is through social media. Said Lucy, "We rely on social media for our marketing." She continued, "People arriving from the Netherlands flew in and came straight to us, because they follow us on Instagram and were dying to come and see us."

Hope on Hopkins has yet to enter any competitions. With the exchange rate definitely against the ZAR, they have chosen to focus on their local clientele and grow their brand that way, along with extensive use of social media. "We work hard to invite certain barmen and bottle store owners to the distillery to meet us," Leigh said, continuing that they believe that with so many gins popping up, they need to concentrate on their home area.

With the large tasting room upstairs, Hope on Hopkins is open on Saturday afternoons between 12 and 5pm for tastings. For a more formal Gin Experience, a curated gin tasting, guests can make a reservation on the one Wednesday evening each month.

If you are wondering how they came up with their name? "The logo is fingers crossed because we Hope like Hell it works," laughed Lucy.

### Hope on Hopkins

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