

True brew

Naturopath and medical herbalist Hannah McMenamain collaborates with Mother Nature on a daily basis to create her blooming marvellous range of teas that harness the benefits of high-quality herbs

Forage + Bloom is an organic herbal tea company born from the passion of its founder, Hannah McMenamain, a naturopath and medical herbalist with a love for plants and people. Since its launch three years ago, Forage + Bloom has quickly gained in popularity, with many of New Zealand's leading cafes and boutique stores now serving and selling the range. Hannah sits down with us for a chat and a cuppa...

Where did the idea of creating medicinal herbal teas come from? My background is in hospitality and it was the alchemy of brewing coffee that sparked my interest in plants and their benefits. After graduating as a herbalist and naturopath, I lived in Rome and was intrigued by how the locals used dried herbs for medicinal prescriptions. I love the concept that herbal infusions can have a profound effect on our health. Taking that idea and drawing on my hospitality experience, I designed a range of herbal teas to suit the hospitality environment, but with a therapeutic edge. I've designed them to be served hot, iced, in cocktails and with fresh herbs, making them fun, interesting and delicious.

Launching a new product in New Zealand can be challenging. How was your tea received and where do you plan to go from here? Forage + Bloom has been remarkably well received. It's encouraging that people are becoming more interested in ways to naturally support their health and wellbeing. It's great to see this reflected in many of our eateries who are serving their customers the highest quality ingredients - including tea.

I'm really excited about the next stage of Forage + Bloom. I'm working on a new direction which highlights my expertise as a herbalist, particularly botanical extractions, and how I can share that with people. I'm developing botanical brewing master classes and moving into consulting roles and research and development in the botanical arena.

Where does your entrepreneurial drive come from and who has influenced you in your business? I love being an entrepreneur; it's exciting to be in that mindset - thinking about innovation and how I can use my skills and passion to do good in the world. Being an entrepreneur is a relatively new role that has

come about from my using plants as medicine and finding a niche way to bring that to the market. There is always a lot to learn in running a business, which is great because I love gaining knowledge in subjects that interest me.

My key mentor is Kate Robertson, my herbal medicine teacher from college. I've worked for Kate on and off for the last seven years, and my time spent with her is invaluable for my growth as a herbalist. Others that have been really supportive professionally are Mike Murphy from Kokako and Suzanne Hall, previously of Living Nature; also, my time managing Tonic Room (a natural health and beauty boutique in Auckland) taught me a lot.

What lessons have you gained since launching your business? Trust your instincts, always come from a genuine and authentic place, work hard and make sure to rest. When challenging things arise, see them as an opportunity to grow. Have fun!

How do you maintain a healthy lifestyle when you are so busy with work? For me, a healthy lifestyle is made up of quality wholefoods, plenty of hydration, a decent amount of sleep, regular outdoor exercise and fun. I have a non-negotiable day off on Sundays - that's my day. Stress and its effects are something I'm very conscious of; as a naturopath I have some great knowledge that helps with staying balanced, but I still have my moments. I have an amazing network of incredibly supportive family and friends and I'm so grateful for that. I think it's really important to remember to laugh, have fun and enjoy life.

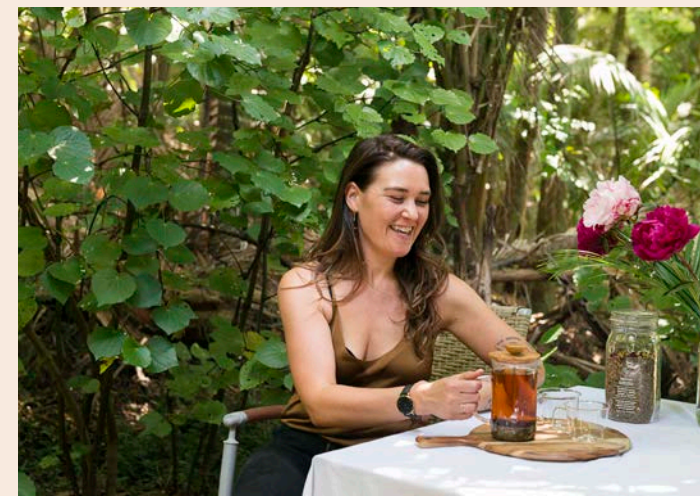
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Hannah's tea tips

- > Herb-infused hydration is an excellent way to increase vitality.
- > Keep adding more water! You can refill your pot multiple times before exhausting the therapeutics and flavour of quality teas.
- > Forage + Bloom teas are made with organic herbs and formulated in therapeutic ratios, making them most effective when taken regularly.

OPPOSITE Hannah uses ingredients and packaging that are biodegradable, compostable and recyclable, with 100 percent organic herbs and no flavourings or additives. The philosophy at Forage + Bloom is to work with plants that grow in abundance and to be thoughtful about their origins. ●

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WORDS Holly Jean Brooker. PHOTOGRAPHY Helen Bankers.