

Marna, a bold new Iced Tea brand crafted in London

As part of our quick founder questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Tristan Flint, cofounder of Iced Tea brand Marna about squeezing lemons, crafting an authentic iced tea brewed with real tea, going viral and being listed in Soho House.

Temps de lecture : minute

4 October 2024

What was the catalyst for launching Marna?

Honestly, this entire journey was never the plan! We have just always had a love of iced tea, and with that, a belief that we could do it better than it has ever been done before. After a road trip along the West Coast of the U.S., I came back to London thinking two things.

1. I love iced tea and so does a lot of the population across the world
2. There is way too much sugar in the existing brands that are out there.

I was craving a refreshing, authentic iced tea that was brewed with real tea, and I wanted something that wasn't loaded with sugar or artificial flavours, which was surprisingly hard to find. So, I started making iced tea for myself, brewing tea bags overnight and squeezing lemons by hand. The response from friends and family was incredible, and my friend, flatmate and now cofounder, Mauro Auzinger, was one of the first to encourage me to take it seriously. Together, we set out to build a brand that would bring real iced tea, made from natural ingredients, to a home market known for its love of tea, but that was clearly missing an iced tea of its own. From those early days of squeezing lemons in my kitchen,

Marna has grown into something much bigger.

Tell us about the business – what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers, and so on?

Marna is a London-based, premium healthy iced tea company that is focused on making great tasting drinks, without compromise. We spent over two years before launching perfecting our recipes, and figuring out what Marna meant to us, and what it could mean to other people too. Since our official launch 9 months ago, we have been so fortunate to now be working with some wonderful partners, such as Fortnum & Mason, Soho House, Ottolenghi and the Dorchester Collection amongst many others. We have two flavours at the moment, both are made by brewing the highest grade of loose-leaf tea we can find for 24 hours, It's this process that allows us to achieve a brilliant nutritional profile, with the majority of the flavours that come through, coming from the tea leaves themselves.



How has the business evolved since its launch?

Marna officially launched in January 2024, and the evolution over the past year has been nothing short of whirlwind. When we first started, it was just me brewing iced tea in my kitchen, experimenting with how much juice you could squeeze out of a lemon. We didn't have a fully fleshed-out plan—we just knew we had something people loved.

Back then, I hand on heart could not have predicted just how crazy this year has been. From going viral on Tiktok earlier this year, to now supplying some of the most incredible locations in the world, it has been a real journey of incredible ups and downs, but we just have so much conviction in what we are doing, and what we want Marna to be, and that is driving us on everyday to keep going.

Tell us about the working culture at Marna?

We are only a team of two! So we haven't had the chance to instil a team culture yet, but what I will say is this - what really sets us apart is our work ethic and how hands on we are in everything that we do. Mauro and I are involved in every part of the business, from designing the cans ourselves to personally delivering orders in a refurbished electric milk float. We believe that staying close to the product and the process is so key to understanding the kind of brand we want to be, but also maintaining that quality and authenticity that Marna is known for. Our growth has been entirely organic - we don't have a history of working in the F&B world, we don't know any buyers, but we are just finding a way, whilst remaining true to who we are as well.

How are you funded?

For the years we spent in development, and up until march this year, funding all came from my savings. I worked as an investment banker for 4 years, which allowed me to work really hard, save what I could and put it straight into recipe development. I was able to save money at all points, by doing everything myself, from branding, labels etc. Nothing, aside from recipe, development was outsourced. Then in march, we did our first and only funding round, bringing onboard 45 wonderful investors that have consisted of friends, family and ex-colleagues. Since bringing on external investors, we have grown the Marna family and now have a fantastic base of support that help us wherever they can - we are lucky to have each

and every one of them onboard.

What's been important for us throughout this process is that we've remained focused on long-term sustainability and financial discipline. We weren't interested in taking on investment just for the sake of rapid growth and raising as much as we could; we wanted to build something that lasts, whilst being able to execute according to what we think is achievable. Marna is a company that is run with a lot of love and effort, and our funding round has given us a great opportunity to execute, win listings and ultimately achieve our goal of sharing a healthy iced tea option with more people.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

All of it! Look, the drinks industry has got to be one of the most competitive in the world. Everyday is a constant challenge, from managing supply chains, to approaching buyers - it's a new world and one that we have no experience in, but we are learning, and learning as quickly as we can.

I am really aware that whilst we're still a small company, it's relatively easy to control quality and ensure that everything aligns with your mission. But as we grow, there's a real risk of losing that focus. For us, every decision, whether it's about packaging, sourcing, or distribution, has to be in line with our commitment to making a high quality product, without compromise.

How does Marna answer an unmet need?

There's a real gap in the market for iced teas that are both healthy and made from real ingredients. Most of the options out there are either loaded with sugar or use artificial flavours, which doesn't appeal to

health-conscious consumers. Simply put, we crafted an iced tea, that actually focuses on the tea.

At the same time, there's a growing demand for products that are sustainably sourced and packaged. Marna is designed to meet both of these needs. Our entire supply chain is 100% recyclable, and we don't use any plastic in our packaging. We've also built strong relationships with our tea suppliers, ensuring that they're paid fairly and have job security.

What's in store for the future?

Simple - sharing Marna with more people. We have worked so hard to create an iced tea that we think people will love, and its now up to us to go and execute on that, and find the right partners, locations and shelves for Marna to sit on. Easier said than done for sure! But a challenge we, and in particular Mauro, are really looking forward to.

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

Never give up. Trust me when I say we have had some really dark moments that have been really challenging, and it has tested us in ways that I didn't know were possible. I can't sit here now and tell anyone reading this what to do - I am still very much figuring it out for myself, but one day, at some point in the future, Mauro and I are going to look back at this journey and whatever the outcome I know that we are going to be able to look each other in the eye and know that we tried our best. We get up every day and try our best and that's all we do. We show up, are prepared to be vulnerable and just try our best. We don't ever want to live with the feeling of 'what if', and so when you find yourself in those tougher moments, remind of your "why", and never lose sight of that. Life

is so short, make the most of everything in front of you.

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

By nature, I am a huge night owl, which is very much similar to my mum, so I tend to start my day around 9/10am (unless we are up delivering early), and then I will work into the night, with a break for the gym in the early evening.

I find a lot of respite and relief with exercise and spending time with my friends and family, so I will always try to prioritise this where I can too.

I love the nights because no one else is working, and I get real time to think and complete tasks without the distractions of an inbox / messages flying around.

Mauro is very much the reverse of this, and often is up very early in the morning and in bed at reasonable times, which is great because combined we offer almost 24-hour coverage!

Tristan Flint is the cofounder of *Marna*.



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