

What is shaping culture? Free from alcohol

By  Brett Rogers

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I explore the edges of culture and how things are changing, providing valuable insights for brands wanting to understand who and what is shaping culture. Today, I explore why calls of 'Let's get waaaasted!' and 'Time to f'k this weekend up!' are on the wane.




Image source: Gallo/Getty Images.

While many societies around the world have invested their spend in non-alcoholic beverages for a few years now, 2019 was a breakthrough year for South Africa in the evolution of our drinking zeitgeist. Within a mere 12 months, we (largely) went from shaming those who were not drinking to warming to the idea that an alcohol-free life is not only achievable, but desirable.

Our parents used to drink and drive as if it was totally normal. Younger generations have almost entirely replaced 'one for the road' with vocal disapproval when someone overindulges. DJ Angela Weickl is one of those who spoke specifically about casual drinking, as opposed to the more obvious versions of alcoholism.

This is a conversation that is starting to emerge more and more, with people becoming less and less tolerant of their casual habits and wishing to stop entirely, or at least drink less.



Angela Weickl
Agent, Manager, Content Creator, Activist, DJ.

What is next, what can we expect in one year?

As I answer this question I am currently on 45 days of sobriety. Working in the entertainment industry means exposure to booze is frequent and unrelenting. At the beginning of the year, I was involved in a responsible drinking awareness campaign which helped open a discussion about the normalcy of "grey area" casual drinking which is not regarded as alcohol abuse but is just as problematic. What I hope to achieve over the next year on a personal level is to stay sober and be done with alcohol permanently. What I would like to do on industry and public level is to build a support network that both educates and encourages honesty about alcohol consumption and the lifestyle choices surrounding it, with the aim of helping people should they want the assistance in making changes. Through their actions.

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At the beginning of 2019, one of the issues confronting non-drinkers was the absolute dearth – with the exception of The Duchess and 0.0% beers – of options available to them. Rock shandies, sparkling water and Coca-Cola are hardly the hallmarks of a lovely evening out.

During the year, the vacuum began to slowly fill – The Duchess and 0.0% beers started to make their mark, the interest in Kombucha grew and Vermont Vergin non-alcoholic gin burst on to the scene. The conversation, too, grew with the inaugural Mindful Drinking Festival taking place late in 2019.



New alcohol-free Mindful Drinking Festival to launch in Cape Town

9 Oct 2019



Liquid chefs like Siavash Behaein are also getting in on the act and experimenting with alternatives to alcohol in cocktails, including using seeds and interesting fermentation techniques.

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When analysing a movement, it's always interesting to speak to people who are affected by it in their business. Siavash Behaein - Liquid Chef at @cocosafar is a man who's lifelong obsession with beverages have made him one of the finest mixologists in the world. Aside from traditional cocktails, Siavash has been bringing Alcohol-Free drinks into his tasting menus as well as experimenting with fresh ideas for Alcohol-Free cocktails. It's revealed a whole new world of flavour and imagination as he seeks out flavours to entice his guests. #nonalcoholic #nonalcoholicdrinks #sober #soberlifestyle #alcoholfreebeer #nonalcoholicspirit #lifestyle #hyhin

A post shared by in_ (@thisisin_) on Aug 16, 2019 at 1:54am PDT

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Given the different groups of consumers who could be interested in a quality alcohol-free product, it's surprising the trend has taken as long as it has to gain momentum:

- **The health-obsessed:** Creating the best-looking and healthiest version of who we can be requires abstaining from many foods and alcohol
- **The law abiders:** Drunk-driving is no longer an acceptable way of handling alcohol.
- **The designated drivers:** We've all been that person, and the thought that runs through my head each and every time is 'If I have one more Rock Shandy, I'm going to lose my mind'.
- **The vain:** Vanity has had a massive impact on alcohol-free, particularly within the millennial audience who is that much savvier and more sensitive to the currents of social media
- **The 'can't drink' crowd:** Alcoholics, diabetics, etc.
- **The religious:** In addition to the 1.3 billion Muslims worldwide forbidden to consume alcohol, there are a number of other religions that frown upon it

In conclusion, the change we're seeing is that the trend towards non-alcoholic is less about the evils of drinking, and more about the pros of not drinking. The culture encourages people to choose a lifestyle that helps them pursue behaviours and products to become the best version of themselves that they can be. And alcohol isn't one of them.

ABOUT BRETT ROGERS

Brett Rogers, culture lead at Cape Town advertising agency HaveYouHeard and content curator for in_, a channel of content, which showcases cultural forces that are changing the world. It aims to inform, inspire and entertain the viewer and does so with multimedia posts, including podcasts, videos, google trends, mini Q+A's and more. in_ talks to those interested in in-depth cultural exploration and those curious about the world we live in.

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