

On the Tipple Trail

Go straight to the source with the Coast's best craft breweries, distilleries and wineries.

WORDS TARA WELLS

Being choosy about your next drink is easy with a selection of local award-winning alcohol producers. Whether you prefer beer, wine or spirits, there's a new favourite waiting to be discovered.

AMBER LANE DISTILLERY

Amber Lane co-founder, Rod Berry, has tasted more than 1,000 whiskies ... in the name of research, of course. The result is a refined palate attuned to the subtleties of flavours and aromas that create the best whiskies.

The goal, ever since its 2017 founding, is to make premium Australian whisky. Along with co-founder Phil Townsend's dedication to the daily demands of whisky production, their efforts have won 11 national and international gold medals in the last two years.

'The great feedback we are getting, from consumers and whisky judges alike, gives us confidence that we are on the right track.'

'It's been exciting to have the whisky world turning their eyes to the Central Coast, and to have whisky makers around Australia seeking our advice – they can see we are doing something exciting,' says Rod.

To taste:

Amber Lane hosts open days at its Yarramalong distillery once a month on Saturdays. Bookings are essential. Learn more about whisky making and how to detect flavours at Introductory or Advanced tasting sessions, available as private events.



Or head to **Parlour Lane**, a new whisky and wine bar in Gosford, which carries an extensive range of Amber Lane whiskies (open Thursday to Sunday evenings).

amberlanedistillery.com
parlourlanegosford.com.au

DISTILLERY BOTANICA

When Philip Moore made the leap from nursery owner to master distiller, he became part of a vanguard igniting a renewed appreciation for gin. In 2007, when Distillery Botanica launched, there were only 15 distilleries across Australia. Now, there are more than 600.

In a crowded market, Philip's experience stands out – first as someone tending to plants in pots, now as someone transforming plants in vats into award-winning spirits and liqueurs.

Recognition has come in many forms: the first Aussie distillery to win Herb Liqueur of the Year in Germany, a gold medal for gin at London's International Wine and Spirit Competition, as well as gold for the Mr Black Cold Brew Coffee Liqueur in London and San Francisco.

Distillery Botanica's latest concoction: Moore's Pearl Crush gin is an ode to the Central Coast. Blended with distilled Akoya saltwater pearls cultivated at Broken Bay Pearls and infused with citrus grown in Kulnura, the final touch is botanicals from the distillery's very own gardens.

To taste:

Distillery Botanica is tucked away in Erina's bushy hinterland, open Wednesday to Sunday. Tastings, tours and workshops start from \$15. While there, enjoy pastries and grazing platters from neighbouring **Bar Botanica**, also open Wednesday to Sunday.

distillerybotanica.com.au
barbotanica.com.au





Firescreek Botanical Winery

FIRESCREEK BOTANICAL WINERY

It's wine, but not as you know it. Forget grape varieties like chardonnay, shiraz and cabernet sauvignon. Instead, Firescreek Botanical Winery uses an array of botanicals. Get your taste buds around fruit-based combinations like Cherry and Black Pepper Wine, Elderberry, Cinnamon and Orange Wine, or Coffee, Chocolate and Blackcurrant Wine.

Firescreek has been growing organic produce on its one-hectare property since 2003. Selecting from over 30 species of fruit, 40 species of roses and countless other botanicals, co-owners Nadia and Francis O'Connell produce around 25 different wines. Unlike typical wines that rely on a single grape harvest, Firescreek makes vegan-friendly wine year-round.

The Central Coast is ideal for this marriage of regenerative farming and winemaking, explains Nadia. 'Holgate is the perfect location for Firescreek Botanical Winery because it's a hidden gem of natural beauty. The peaceful surroundings inspire everything we create here, from our unique botanical wines to the special experiences we offer.'

To taste:

Open Wednesday to Sunday, wine tasting is complimentary at **Firescreek Botanical Winery**. Guests can stroll the grounds and view the production area. Chocolate and wine pairing workshops or a garden tour with the winemaker are available at a charge. While in Holgate, enjoy lunch at nearby vegetarian **Bamboo Buddha Café**.

firescreek.com.au
bamboobuddha.com.au

BAY ROAD BREWING

Bringing the good times to 'Gossy' is Bay Road Brewing in the heart of Gosford. Containing a six-hectolitre brewhouse (that's 600 litres, hectic indeed) and 10,000 litres of tank space, pull up a pew to watch the microbrewery team at work. They're constantly pursuing the creation of better beers; try the 'Monsoon Monster', a New England IPA with tropical flavours of mango and orange peel. There are also wheat beers, black lager, stouts and apple cider.

To taste:

Open Tuesday to Sunday, **Bay Road Brewing** is a 50-metre stroll from the Central Coast Stadium and Leagues Club. Choose from 19 craft beers on tap while a changing roster of food trucks provide the eats.

bayrdbrewing.com.au

Best Bars

IF YOU PREFER A NIGHT OUT RATHER THAN SELECTED TASTINGS AT THE SOURCE, THESE BARS SET THE VIBES FOR A GOOD ONE.

In Ettalong

Enjoy Italian wines, antipasti platters and fancy cocktails at **Bar Toto** (bartoto.com.au), Thursday to Sunday evenings. Café by day, on Saturday nights **Lords of Pour** (lordsofpour.com) transforms into a funky neighbourhood bar.

In Terrigal

Crowne Plaza Terrigal Pacific's ground floor bar and cafe, **Terrigal Beach House** (terrighalbh.com.au), enjoys beach views and ocean breezes. Open daily. **Mumbo Jumbos** (mumbojumbos.com.au) describes itself as a Caribbean beach shack, serving music, food and cocktails with a view from Tuesday to Sunday. Come early to snag a coveted couch at **Pocket Bar** (houseofpocket.com.au) where the drinks are taken as seriously as the food. Open every day.

In Wyong

Opened in July 2023, **Jerry Sent Me** ([Instagram @jerry_sent_me](https://www.instagram.com/jerry_sent_me)) is part of Wyong's changing scene. A whisky bar embracing saloon noir, time flies over carefully made cocktails. Enjoy a Middle Eastern menu and extensive bar selections at **Motel Mezza** (motelmezza.com.au), open Tuesday to Saturday.



Bay Road Brewing