



Wisconsin

# Breweries, Wineries & Distilleries



▪ A GUIDE FOR 2024-2025 ▪



**Making  
wine  
in the  
drumlins**

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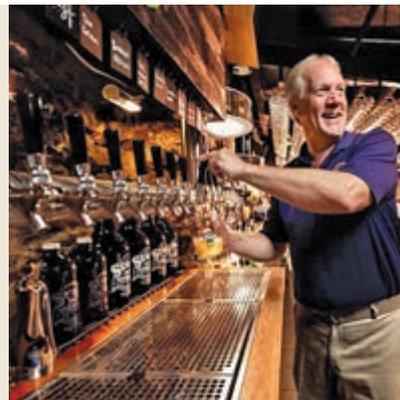
**A taste of  
Marinette  
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**Moonshine,  
spirits  
in the  
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# Wisconsin Breweries, Wineries & Distilleries

• A GUIDE FOR 2024-2025 •

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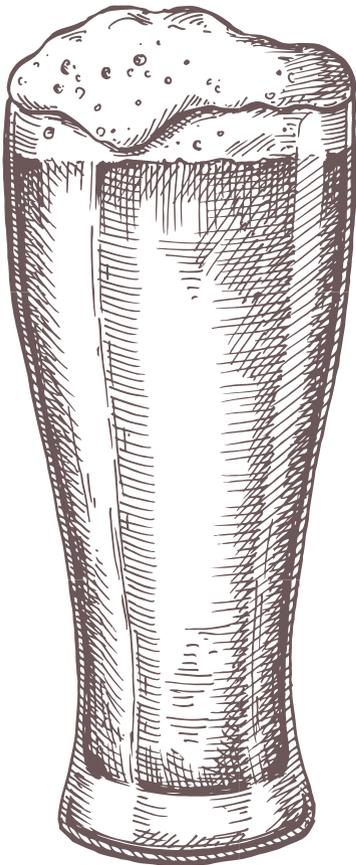


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The Badger's Den Brewers Club in Waupaca brews its own beers and ales.



## Always brewing in Waupaca

BY JAMES CARD

**A** local brew club was featured in the recently released documentary, “Back on Track: Rebuilding the Waupaca Train Depot.” The story follows Mike Kirk and his years-long journey in restoring the train depot back to its former glory.

The historic depot is also the home to some of the events of the Badger's Den Brewing Club. While working on the documentary, filmmaker and director Max Hauser was able to film the club's annual beer-tasting night. He interviewed club president Cody Banks and captured the scene of the depot packed with people trying various ales, pilsners and homebrews.

The Waupaca Train Depot is also the venue

for the club's biannual potluck dinners. This year it was home to their celebration of National Mead Day, held the first Saturday in August. The key ingredient in mead is the honey and the members pitched funds to purchase some of the finest honey in the world: Waupaca Wildflower from Dancing Bear Apiary.

Last year, local beekeeper Kent Pegorsch entered this honey in the Black Jar Honey Tasting Contest organized by the Center for Honeybee Research. He won in the Medium Amber category. The goal of the contest is to identify the best tasting honey in the world. The contest is named “Black Jar” because all of the honey jars are shrouded in a coded black

bag so the judges only focus on taste and not color or clarity. It's the beekeeping equivalent of winning the Super Bowl.

The club also submits entries for the H.H. Hinder Head Butt competition. So far no member has won but their entries have received some promising comments from the judges. The competition attracts top brewers from across the Midwest. The club keeps a booth at the Waupaca County Fair and enters their brews in the local competition. They also take field trips visit other brewing events and operations such as Old World Wisconsin and the Rio Lobo Winery in Weyauwega.

This year the members are participating in a "same beer-different ingredient" challenge. The variable ingredient this year is the sugar additive. Members will reconstruct their version of a 1970 Adnams best bitter. All make the same beer, but months later when the individual beers are cracked open, the excitement is about how each beer turned out in its own unique way.

When not hosting events at the train depot, the club holds monthly meetings every second Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the lower level of the Waupaca Historical Society's Holly History and Genealogy Center. The meetings are like other meetings: updates, old news, upcoming events, the treasurer's report and so on. What makes this meeting unique is everybody brings a tasting glass and plenty of bottles get passed around. At the start of each meeting, people go around the room and talk about what they brought to share. It might be a cranberry wine, an Irish stout, a German lager or apple-flavored mead. They explain the back-story, how it was made and everybody get a taste.

One spring tradition is having an annual Brew Day. It starts around mid-morning and can last until dark. For the past couple years, the event has been hosted by member Chris Johnson. He and his wife Stacia renovated the historic Weller Store in Rural, a landmark along the Crystal River. He pitches a tent outside in case of rain and brewers set up their gas burners and stainless steel cookpots of skunky-smelling hop concoctions.

It's a casual affair and members swap notes on techniques and insights. "Sometimes if somebody is going to brew, they will tell somebody and they'll say I'll brew with you. So we might have two or three people brewing together. It's a social gathering," said Johnson who has been in the club for 10 years.

The club also hosts an equipment swap. Members are hustlers when scrounging up old oak barrels, tubs, small vats, tubing, funnels, glass jugs and cases of empty bottles to further their projects. "It be quite honest, I think we're more of a do-it-yourself club. Look what everyone does. No one is averse to making their own equipment," said member Robert Forseth.

Forseth and Eric Melum are the club's longest standing members, joining when the club was started in 2012. One of the first decisions was to define what kind of club they would be: a beer-only club or any kind of beverage made through the art of fermentation.

"If we were making wine or mead, that's not beer. We decided to be a fermentation club," said Melum, but they decided to keep the Badger's Den Brewing Club name even though they welcome all makers of fermented drinks. ■

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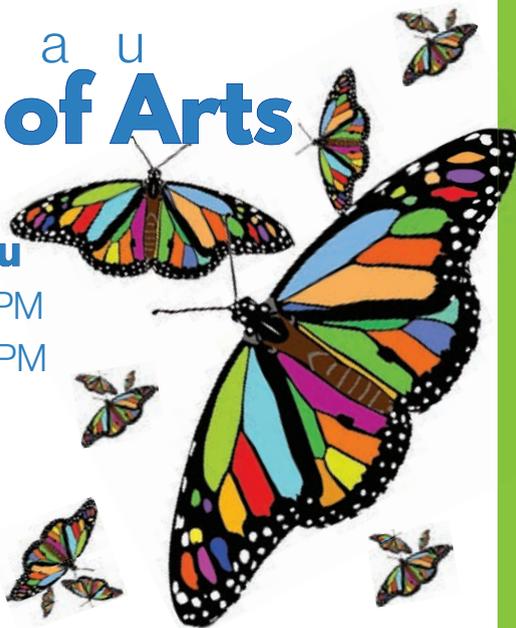
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# Wine tasting leads Wood County couple to retirement plan

BY MIKE WARREN



Rocky and Karmin Bolder explain the meaning behind their label, during our May 17 visit to Empty Nest Winery, Milladore. **Kris Leonhardt photo**

**W**hen Rocky and Karmin Bolder's four children were all through graduating from Auburndale High School, their days of sitting on bleachers at sporting events were over. Little did the Milladore couple know their next pastime would also figure in to their retirement plans.

"Once the girls went to college, I needed a life because we sat in a gym, so I finally met my husband again and we started touring wineries," explained Karmin Bolder, pertaining to how the couple's wine-making adventure began.

"The people that do wineries are very good at networking," Karmin told us, during our May 17 visit to The Empty Nest Winery. "We spent a lot of time in peoples' back rooms. We went to The Lil' Ole Winemaker in Wausau and we watched a video and he showed us how to make wine and we started to make wine. We did it with another couple for a couple years and then COVID hit and we bought them out," Bolder added. "We opened this past December. Probably the December prior to that we decided, 'Yeah, we're going to do this. We're going to put a building up and we're going to look at retiring.'"

The couple learned and practiced how to make wine and toured other wineries for five years before officially opening The Empty Nest on Dec. 1, 2023.

"She had a book and we would just, as a husband and wife,

we'd open it up and say, 'Okay, let's go to these three wineries this Saturday,' so we would do that," Rocky Bolder recalled. "And by seeing a fair amount of wineries, from the monster down at Wollersheim to someone's garage and everything in between, she just got the idea that, 'Hey, we could do this.' I dug my heels in a little at first until I wrapped my head around, 'Okay, is it a retirement gig? Okay.' And after seeing a lot of these different places and seeing them successful, it was basically an 'If you build it, they will come' type of a thing, because the other thing we noticed by seeing these places was ages," Rocky added. "Soup to nuts. Young people to older people and everything in between."

Once Rocky and Karmin decided to move ahead with their plans, they quickly realized they needed to put up a new building. After the core facility was built, the family finished off the interior themselves, sourcing all of the wood from the woods on their 80-acre property. The wood on the front of the bar was left over from when the couple built their nearby home 24 years ago. They still have some landscaping to do, and would someday like to add an overlook along the pond adjacent to the winery, which currently features some outdoor seating.

Besides 18 varieties of sweet wines, The Empty Nest also has six dry wines. They also serve pizza, pizza fries, pretzels and cheese and sausage trays.

As for entertainment, free Bingo is offered every Thursday night from 6 to 8 p.m. Sundays feature various craft and paint parties. Live music is featured throughout the summer. The facility – which can hold up to 80 people – is also available for corporate events, bridal showers, Christmas parties and more.

“Tell us what you want and we’ll see what we can do for you,” says Karmin.

The business also has a website and Facebook page. Current hours are Thursdays 4 to 8 p.m., Fridays 2 to 8 p.m., Saturdays 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sundays 11 to 5. Central Wisconsin’s newest winery is located 12 miles east of Marshfield, 21 miles north of Wisconsin Rapids, 23 miles northwest of Stevens Point and less than 40 miles southwest of Wausau.

And so far, so good, says the couple.

“We always set a goal and we’ve met that goal every weekend,” Karmin told us.

Meanwhile, the Merrill natives still work their fulltime jobs. Rocky is a 29-year veteran of the Portage County Sheriff’s Department, where he is currently the Superintendent of the Juvenile Detention

Center. Karmin is currently a cardiology nurse at the Marshfield Medical Center, where she’s worked for 30 years. Retirement, they say, should come within the next year to two.

Three of the couple’s four children – Kaleb, Hannah and Rachel – work at the winery periodically. Ben, the oldest, lives in Randolph about two hours away. Hannah, a Phy. Ed. teacher in Marshfield, is living at home while she saves for a house of her own. Kaleb and Rachel are nearby.

But even when they are not in the winery helping out with a special event or during a busy weekend, you can always find them watching over Mom and Dad. On the wine label, they’re the four birds perched above the couple under a heart amongst the branches of two trees, high school sweethearts who have once again found each other – not in a noisy high school gymnasium, but in that not-quite-empty nest on Smokey Hill Road in Milladore, as their game plan for retirement begins to play itself out. ■



Rocky Bolder demonstrates the bottling process used at Empty Nest Winery, which opened Dec. 1, 2023, 12 miles east of Marshfield. **Kris Leonhardt photo**

# The Empty Nest Winery LLC



**Owners:** Karmin & Rocky Bolder  
**Address:** 10915 Smokey Hill Rd. Milladore, WI 54454  
**Contact us:** [tenwinery@gmail.com](mailto:tenwinery@gmail.com) or 715-218-3822  
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# Making wine in the heart of the drumlins

*Edwin Brix Vineyard has been making wine in this unique part of Wisconsin since 2010*

BY CLARICE CASE

**H**idden just outside of Juneau is Dodge County's first licensed winery, Edwin Brix Vineyard.

Edwin Brix Vineyard is owned and operated by the Sell family on the farm that the family has occupied since 1893 when great-grandfather August Sell moved from Cascade, Wis. to the Town of Clyman and started a dairy farm and crops.



Edwin Brix Vineyard, located outside of Juneau, has a tasting room with indoor and outdoor seating along with plenty of open space for their live music and food trucks they host in the summer. **Clarice Case photos**



Twelve of Edwin Brix Vineyard's wines are on display along with their awards inside the tasting room.



The 1600 grapevines at Edwin Brix stretch out over this hill and down behind it.

The name Edwin traces back to August's son and grandson, who made the property the Sell family home, was passed down to sales manager Jocelyn Mentuis' uncle and cousin, and is the middle name of her father, brother and nephew.

Mentuis' parents, Marty and Chris Sell, married in the 70's, bought the property from her grandparents and moved there in 1978.

The Sell family, now in its fifth generation, has been "continuing the tradition of growing things here in Wisconsin" on their land for over 130 years.

The land is unique in its own right because Dodge County is located in an area of the state with the highest concentration

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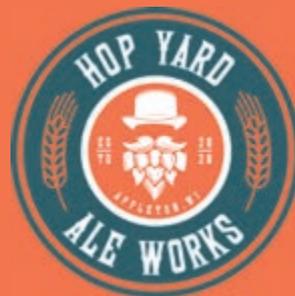
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of drumlins, rolling hills created by glaciers, in the world. The second highest concentration is located in Upstate New York, another area populated with vineyards.

Underneath the drumlins is limestone which allows for the necessary drainage to keep grape vine roots happy, creating an ideal growing environment, Mentuis explained.

While the land may be ideal, the climate is where the challenges lie. Wisconsin's unpredictable winters and summers can make growing difficult. The growing season is shorter here than in milder climates. Budding typically happens around mid-May and harvesting needs to happen before the ground freezes. Mentuis said a wet spring and a hot, dry summer is the preferred weather in the growing season.

The other issue is traditional grapes do not grow in Wisconsin, so a variety of red and white cold hardy grapes are grown here. They are rated for -40 degrees, meaning as long as the temperature does not dip below that mark, the vines should be fine. Mentuis added they also like to get a lot of snow before it gets cold to help insulate the ground.

Despite the challenges, Edwin Brix is proud to say 100% of their wine is made from the grapes grown on their property; something Mentuis believes only 5-10% of Wisconsin vineyards can say.

The family started making wine in 2010 and began with 150 or 200 grapevines. They have since grown to 1,600 grapevines and

seven varietals. They have created a total of 17 wines, the details of which can be found on their website. Twelve are currently available for purchase.

Mentuis' personal favorite is the sweetest of their white wines, Academy Girl, named in memory of her grandmother who received the nickname because she attended Winnebago Lutheran Academy in Fond du Lac for high school. The wine was also released during her father's toast at her wedding.

She also acknowledged Aunt Ruth's Rhubarb Wine and new summer release, Kindergarten Karen's Cranberry Wine, as some other favorites.

Some of the best sellers include Brianna, LaCrosse, their red wines and other fruit wines.

One of their E Flat Eddie label fruits wines, MayberrE Farms – Strawberry Wine, uses strawberries locally grown at Mayberry Farms in Mayville.

The tasting room is open every day, Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday, 12-4 p.m. In the summer, starting Memorial Day weekend, on Sunday afternoons from 2-4 p.m. through October and Wednesday evenings 5-7 p.m. to Labor Day weekend, Edwin Brix will be hosting live music, as well as food trucks on select dates.

Edwin Brix also offers the opportunity to volunteer with harvesting or bottling and other activities. Volunteers will receive lunch and a free bottle of wine.

To learn more you can visit [www.edwinbrix.com](http://www.edwinbrix.com), sign up for their mailing list, or visit their Facebook page. ■



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# Forward Beverage Company, in less than a year, is growing non-alcoholic beverage business

BY B.C. KOWALSKI

**W**alking into Forward Beverage Co. downtown feels a lot like walking into any downtown cocktail lounge, except for one crucial difference: You'll feel a lot different walking out.

That's because none of the drinks on hand at Forward are alcoholic. But they taste just as good.

Forward Beverage Company opened up in September 2023 in the former Sweet Lola's location on Third Street in downtown Wausau. The new business is a non-alcoholic lounge, so none of the cocktails they serve contain alcohol.

Paul Yanzer, who along with his wife Amy officially opened up the lounge downtown, said he gave up drinking alcohol a

number of years ago, and when the couple goes out to eat, for instance, it pretty much means he's going to be drinking water.

The Yanzers think we can do better. And if anyone were the person to do it, it would be Paul. He has beverages down to a science, literally. Paul is a chemist and a physicist. He managed research and development at Octopi Brewing in Waunakee. Through that company he worked with a number of brands and helped them develop their flavor.

Paul put that training and research to work with the Forward Beverage Company. The lounge started with two drinks that he developed: The Citrosa, which is a non-alcoholic version of a mimosa, and the In-Fashion, which is a non-alcoholic version of

an old-fashioned (sweet). They've since added others, including a lavender-based drink to help with sleep and a coffee-based one.

The In-Fashion uses bitters from Timekeeper Distillery. Forward beverages use real sugars and no artificial flavors in their making, Paul says. All the beverages are pre-made and poured from a tap.

Both of those come in two different varieties: a soft cocktail, which is fine for everyone from children to adults to consume, and a social seltzer, which has CBD and ashwaganda. The combo provides a mellowing effect. All of their beverages also have electrolytes to help customers with hydration.

The beverages are served in a stylish aluminum cup that customers can bring back for a \$1 discount on their next beverage.

But it's not just the gold and black in-person lounge where the Yanzers hope to have an impact. The couple planned to work with restaurants to have their beverages on tap, and to focus on wholesale distribution.

That's grown dramatically in the less than one year Forward has been in business. The beverages are available at dozens of locations both on tap in places that serve, as well as in cans at various retail locations throughout central Wisconsin. Some examples are Emy J's in Stevens Point, Family Natural Foods in Wisconsin Rapids and Reservoir Dog Saloon in Mosinee.

Forward Beverage Co. is located at 303 N. Third Street. Their hours are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Find them on Facebook under Forward Beverage Co. ■

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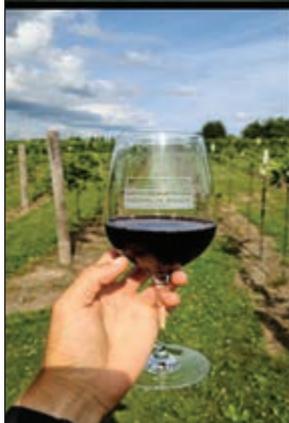
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# A taste of local history

*Rail House Brew Pub has been brewing since 1871*

BY KAITY COISMAN

**F**rom a railroad outpost building to an established brewing company, Rail House Brew Pub, has built its reputation on local brewing heritage to strengthen community ties. The Marinette hot spot prides itself on being built on history, community and variety.

The roots of the brewery go back to 1871, originally located in Menominee, Mich., but moved locations to Marinette in 1997. Present Brew Master Chris Konyn wanted to keep the brewery origins alive through a “throw-back” beer. The Silver Cream historic lager was originally brewed from 1871 to 1966, but Konyn brought it back in 2005 with the help of research and residents.

“We did some research and found as close as we could what the original recipe was. We talked to a lot of old-timers in the area and their memories of it. We did some digging and came

up with something that has been very pleasing to everyone who tried it,” Konyn explained.

Amongst the historic silver cream lager are 14 other beers on tap served and crafted in-house. Taps include a spectrum of American ales, lagers, English ales and German lagers and are interchanged seasonally and sometimes monthly.

“The beer itself has some local historical pride in it. But we also treat the beer as any flavorful item on a menu where we are just trying to give people what they want... I know that the Rail House, the congregation center that it is, gives me a good sense of accomplishment that people can come here and have a great variety of beer to choose from, and they’ve got a taste of history with our silver cream beer that has been brewed in this area for a long time,” Konyn said.

With a wide variety of menu items and brews, the Rail House

Pictured are some of the vessels that contribute to the array of American ales, lagers, English ales and German lagers that are interchanged seasonally.  
Submitted photo

Brew Pub created a storefront brewery in the front of the building to allow patrons to order specific brews.

“In 2019 we expanded to a 15 barrel commercial type brewery we built on to the side of the building and added six more fermentation vessels and conditioning tanks with a canning line that we have canned six packs that we have in stores in the northeast region of Wisconsin,” Konyn said, noting they hope to continue their expansion to more bars, restaurants and grocery stores in the area.

Rail House Brew Pub is on HWY 41, so it attracts a strong local presence as well as tourists throughout the summer. Find the brewpub at 2029 Old Peshtigo Ct., Marinette open Monday to Saturday 11 a.m.-9 p.m., and Sundays 11 a.m.-5 p.m. to experience a taste of local history. ■



Stop-light taps allow patrons to choose from the variety of 15 brewed in-house beers.



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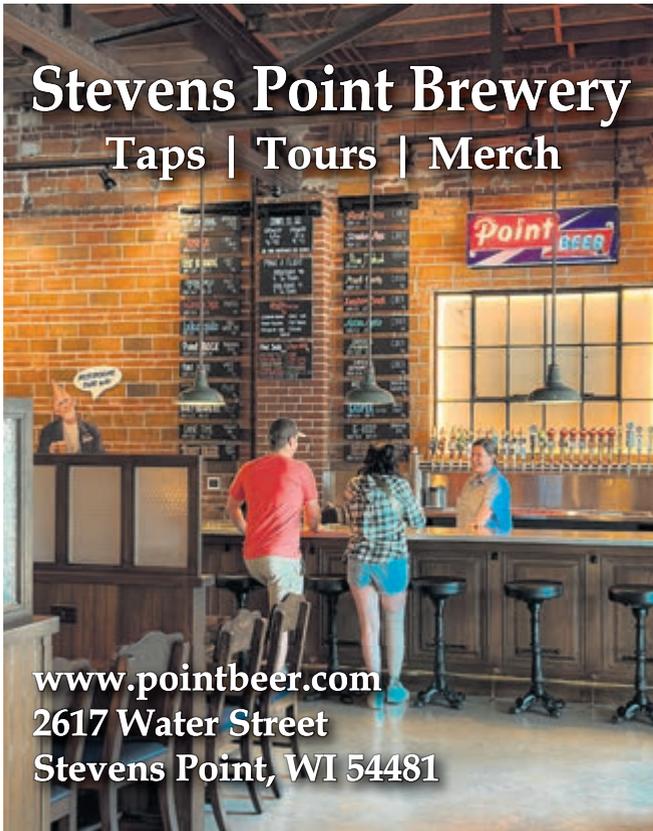
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# Sunset Hollow Wine Bistro & Gifts

*Wine, food and so much more*

BY TINA L. SCOTT

**S**unset Hollow Ranch & Winery in the Town of Pine River east of Merrill has been offering their clientele a variety of experiences for several years. Visitors are encouraged to meet animals on the ranch, enjoy handcrafted wines made on-site, purchase organic meat products and wines, and even experience the opportunity to unwind with goat yoga and wine.

Now that same name, the same meat products and handcrafted wines have made their way into downtown Merrill, providing residents and area visitors with a unique experience in an unexpected setting. Melissa and Joe Hoffman, owners of both, decided to open a new, larger location where guests can enjoy their wine indoors in a comfortable setting year-round, with outdoor seating available when the weather permits.

Tucked into an historic building brought to new life, guests can expect the same house and seasonal wines and the same attention to creating a unique experience they've come to know out at the ranch, but now they can also enjoy food, desserts and specials to pair with wine, as well as a selection of gifts available for purchase.

Located at 811 E. First St. in Merrill, the business held several soft opening dates before holding their grand opening in January 2024. They used the time to test out a few things, get a feel for busier times, and create some new offerings.

Hours are Thursday, Friday and Saturday, noon to 7 p.m., occasionally opening additional days for special occasions.

One of Sunset Hollow's seasonal specialty wines, Country Christmas, is a featured wine during the winter months.

Tina L. Scott photo



A north-facing view showcases the old tin ceilings and the raised seating areas in front of the brightly lit street-facing windows.

Tina L. Scott photo

Stepping into the bistro is an unexpected surprise. The interior space the Hoffmans have created features a somewhat modern rustic Italian ambiance, with seating available on two levels to add interest. Some of the decor items in the bistro are actually gift items available for purchase, many of which will likely pair well with a good bottle of wine.

Speaking of pairing well with wine, Sunset Hollow Wine Bistro & Gifts changes their menu up seasonally.

The spring-summer menu features unique flavor combinations, including four panini options, all served with a side of fresh veggies. Four flatbread options were also on the menu, including an all-meat topped flatbread and an Italian-topped flatbread. Though the offerings change seasonally, this is a teaser of what you might expect on the menu while saving room for a little surprise.

A caprese pasta salad was another menu option and the bistro also offers charcuterie boards. One of their recent charcuterie offerings included hard salami, ham, bistro crackers, three varieties of cheese, garlic-stuffed olives, nuts and seasonal fruit. For a sweet treat, try the chocolate strawberry bruschetta.

Italiano Fridays offer a new pasta option each week, Saturdays feature Bloody Marys, and Thursdays are “Girls Night Out” with cocktail cheese plates available. Specialty cocktails change weekly.

As a wine bistro, wines made locally at the Sunset Hollow Winery are always featured and are available by the glass or by

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

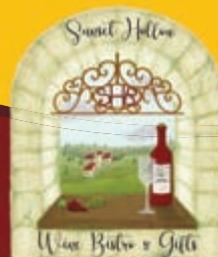
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Sunset Hollow Wine Bistro & Gifts opened on a Wednesday evening in February for a special occasion - Valentine's Day - providing area couples with a romantic Italian-inspired meal and wines to celebrate their love.

Blue Sky Photography LLC/Peter Tesch photo

» SUNSET HOLLOW CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

the bottle and are also available by the case by pre order. The bistro has wine punch cards: buy 10 glasses of wine, get one free and/or buy 10 bottles of wine, get one free.

The wine list changes seasonally.

"We're only going to have specific wines here that fit the season," Melissa Hoffman said. In addition to a seasonal selection of Sunset Hollow specialty wines, even house wines will be carefully selected.

"The other wines that I'm choosing to place here will be more geared for the season, like your Blackberry, your Sunset Sangria [in winter], versus in summer I'll pull in the Peach Raspberry Sangria, pull in the Kiwi Pear instead of maybe having the Apple, and kind of start changing them a little bit that way."

The wine list for the recent spring season included Lemon Berry, Splash of Summer, Aloha Breeze, Flamingo, Sunk-issed, Taste da Island, Pink Berry, Beachy Berry Sangria, and Chocolate Strawberry Indulgence. House wines on the spring list included Rustic Berry, Kindred Spirits,

Southern Charm, and Firefly, with Rosie Red and Sahara for dry wine options. Those who prefer reds could choose from Blueberry, Cherry Jubilee, Blackberry, Black Raspberry, and Peach Raspberry Sangria.

"Our Black Raspberry blended with peach blossom vodka makes the perfect wine for sipping on a front porch swing," Melissa said. Spring blush options included Raspberry Dragon-fruit and Strawberry. White wine offerings for spring were White Cranberry, Peach Apricot, Mango Twist, and Pineapple Pear.

With so many ever-changing choices, it's easy to get overwhelmed just trying to choose. Not sure what kind of wine to pick? Ask for a sample. Better yet, try a pre-selected flight of four wines or create your own flight of four wines that sound appealing to enjoy.

The wine bistro also offers a specialty daily cocktail and Jameson old fashioned. Prefer beer over wine? Sunset Hollow Wine Bistro also offers a selection of craft bottled beers; non-alcoholic options



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on their drink menu include lemonade, sparkling flavored water, Sprecher sodas, and teas.

Over the summer months, wine choices evolved to fit the season and the temperatures. And as autumn brings cooler temperatures, crisp leaves of brilliant colors, and an abundance of pumpkins and cornstalks to decorate the scenery, Sunset Hollow Wine Bistro will again shift their wine offerings to befit the season. Melissa anticipates a lineup of wines that will pair perfectly with a slightly more seasonal menu, for gatherings with friends and family at the bistro after a day of apple or pumpkin picking in a nearby orchard, horseback riding on a perfect fall day, hiking in the nearby Harrison Hills or just walking along the River Bend Trail to take in scenic Wisconsin River views.

For more information follow Sunset Hollow Ranch & Winery and Sunset Hollow Wine Bistro & Gifts on their combined Facebook page at facebook.com/sunsethollowranch or call 715-722-0471. ■



Owner Melissa Hoffman serves up a glass of wine and a smile at her new Sunset Hollow Wine Bistro & Gifts location on E. First St. in downtown Merrill. **Tina L. Scott photo**

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Shelves in the Northern Waters Distillery tasting room are lined with the brandy, bourbon, gin and vodka they make and bottle right there on U.S. 51 in Minocqua.

# Making moonshine, spirits in the Northwoods

*Family-owned distillery imparts its own flavor on the industry*

BY EILEEN PERSIKE



Visitors to the Northwoods looking for a little down time may want to plan a trip to Northern Waters Distillery in Minocqua. The cozy tasting room and bright and visible production facility is situated on a private lake off US 51 South.

Northern Waters Distillery was founded by Peter Nomm in 2013. Nomm and his wife, Lisa, opened a small shop downtown Minocqua. Five years later the couple determined a larger space was needed and built the current facility. A year ago, Nomm sold the business to one of his employees. Jake Donahue, who was hired to manage the front of house, bought N.W.D. with his sister Sarah Johnson and her husband Cal Johnson.

“He went through all the growing pains,” Sarah said of Peter Nomm. “He started it up, figuring out what kinds of products, what kind of capacity he would end up needing. He started with moonshines because they are nice and quick to make and he could make them there in a smaller facility. From there, I think he realized, ‘I’ve got something going here.’”

Donahue brought to the partnership years of Chicago bar and restaurant management experience, as well as interest and knowledge of making cocktails.



Co-owner of Northern Waters Distillery, Cal Johnson, right, talks with head distiller Jake Walsh in the production room at the facility. Eileen Persike photos

“When Jake came in he realized the potential that came with the products distilled on site, came up with an expanded menu and Northern Waters became known for its specialty cocktails, in addition to the whiskey, vodka, gin and bourbon,” Sarah said.

Every cocktail is made with spirits made on site. They also make all of their own shrubs (a vinegar-based syrup used as a substitute for citrus in cocktails), syrups and bitters.

“We’re one of the few places in the area that is able to do that and I think people understand and appreciate it,” Sarah said. “We try to source locally as much as possible, to be a true family-owned small craft distillery.”

## ALL IN ONE PLACE

Everything is done in house, from mashing, fermenting and aging to creating labels and bottling the finished product.

The production process for all spirits begins with heating grain and water in a large metal still. The grain comes from – and is returned to – a farm in Rhinelander. After reaching the desired temperature, the mash is transferred into bins to ferment, after adding distiller’s yeast, for five days. It is then moved back into the metal still to separate the alcohol from the grain and water. Alcohol has a lower boiling point, so it will evaporate, leaving the grain and water in the still.

The distilled alcohol is good and bad, Sarah explained, and it’s up to the head distiller to determine when the alcohol is ready; when it switches from the bad to the good, based on temperature, taste and smell. It’s what sets them apart from the national brands, she said.



We like all our products to have those subtle notes of flavor profile because it’s a base spirit and you want to envision and have your own take on how you’re going to finish your cocktail.



“Those cuts are super important for us,” said Jake Walsh, head distiller at Northern Waters Distillery. “So many of the national branding go to what is called continuous distillation – it’s all automated.”

When it comes to whiskey, Walsh said one of the rules is the end flavor profile and end color have to come from the aging process in the barrel.

“If you add anything artificial, caramel color or flavoring agent, it loses its name designation of a bourbon, whiskey or a rye and becomes a generic whiskey,” Walsh said. “So we want to keep everything natural. The barrel is our end step. Our end color and end flavor profile came from the barrel; nothing was added to it.”

It is Northern Waters’ vodka and gin that allows the distillers to be creative and add flavors to the spirits. That is achieved one

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

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Co-owner Sarah Johnson talks about the distillation process as the “good” alcohol pours into a metal barrel.

» NORTHERN WATERS DISTILLERY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

of two ways: through distilling or maceration. An example of the maceration process is the company’s coffee vodka, where cold press espresso is added, creating an “absolutely fantastic” flavor, Walsh said.

The flavored clear spirits are flavored through distillation, a process that requires filling a “gin basket” full of whatever they want the product to taste like.

“For our bacon jalapeno, we take five pounds of bacon that we get from Lake Tomahawk Meat Market,” Walsh said. “We cook it up just as crispy and wonderful as you want for breakfast, and we put that finished bacon in [the basket], with another gin basket on top of there, full of raw jalapenos; put those in line in the column still and when this thing distills, when the vapor comes up [and condenses], it’s picking up all that flavor, the bacon and raw jalapeno, and that comes out as a finished product.”

**TRUE OR FALSE**

True or false, Walsh asked. Gin is just flavored vodka. True! Gin starts out as vodka.

“What makes it gin is that botanical load,” Walsh said. “By law it has to have juniper berries as part of the botanical. It can be a little as one juniper berry, but it has to be there. You can adjust the flavor of gin by the botanicals.”

Northern Waters’ Northwoods Gin is beginning to get noticed. After Walsh and Cal Johnson attended Distill America in Madison in May, Walsh said social media comments say the

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gin is a “must try.” In addition to juniper berries, N.W.D. collects white pine bark and wintergreen from the property and adds lemon, coriander and hibiscus to the distillation process. It offers something more subtle than the “slap in the face” pine tree taste that some gins with big juniper loads have.

“We like all our products to have those subtle notes of flavor profile because it’s a base spirit and you want to envision and have your own take on how you’re going to finish your cocktail,” Walsh explained. “If you have a spirit that is too powerful, it will overtake it and you can’t do anything else with it. Too many of the industry standards are so powerful – and a lot of them are so artificial – that when you make a cocktail out of it people are experiencing that artificialness and not knowing it until they taste our stuff and they say, ‘wow, that’s what gin is supposed to taste like.’”

For those interested in more details about the production process, N.W.D. offers tours at 5 p.m. Fridays and 1 p.m. Saturdays. Signup is online at [northernwatersdistillery.com](http://northernwatersdistillery.com). The tasting room is open



A view of the production room from the Northern Waters Distillery tasting room. All spirits used in the cocktails made there are made in house.

at noon Tuesday through Sunday, with varying closing times. Whiskey pour flights are available as well as a menu featuring seasonal favorites, signature cocktails, old fashioned, kicked – up mules and many

other hand-crafted cocktails.

There is a new outdoor bar and seating that overlooks Clawson Lake; a welcoming atmosphere for visitors and locals alike who are looking for a little downtime. ■

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# Ein Prosit der Gemütlichkeit (a toast to well-being!)

Oktoberfest set to return  
to downtown Tomahawk

BY JALEN MAKI



**T**his fall, a new Tomahawk tradition will return for its second year.

Oktoberfest, organized by Tomahawk Main Street Inc. (TMS), will be held in downtown Tomahawk Saturday, Oct. 12.

“You don’t have to be of German descent to enjoy beer here in Tomahawk,” said Jennifer Turkiewicz, TMS executive director.

In providing a quick history lesson on Oktoberfest, Turkiewicz explained the event originated in Munich, Germany on Oct. 12, 1810, in celebration of the marriage of the Crown Prince of Bavaria, who later became King Louis I, to Princess Therese von Sachsen-Hildburghausen. The festival concluded five days





Photos by Jalen Maki

later with a horse race held in an open area that came to be called Theresienwiese (“Theresa’s green”).

The following year, the race was combined with a state agricultural fair, and in 1818, booths serving food and drink were introduced.

Each year, the mayor of Munich taps the first keg to kick off the festival.

“With an amazing history already spanning 213 years, we couldn’t help but join in on the fun,” Turkiewicz stated. “Our Tomahawk Main Street Wine Walk, held the Friday of Mother’s Day weekend, has become a tradition for many, so it was a natural swing into a beer festival. We learned a lot in our first year, and we are excited to evolve this event into a stroll down our historic Main Street.”

Last year, TMS’s Oktoberfest featured a dozen different craft beer options and a golden keg tapped by Fest Master Jim Wise. Food offerings from Trig’s and Sideways Wine and Craft Beer, as well as desserts, were also part of the inaugural event. Those in attendance were dressed to impress, with many clad in

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

lederhosen and dirndl while enjoying the craft beer and live music.

With Tomahawk's second Oktoberfest on the horizon, Turkiewicz said TMS aims to introduce new ideas and options, noting that the organization "(looks) forward to expanding the palette this year with new flavors and a feast fit for a king."

"While there will be no horse races, there will surely be fun games to play along the way," Turkiewicz said. "A new Fest Master shall be chosen, and you will want to be sure to attend the official 'crowning.' Join us downtown as Tomahawk Main Street proudly presents Oktoberfest."

For more information about TMS or Oktoberfest, visit [tomahawkmainstreet.org](http://tomahawkmainstreet.org).

*Oans, zwoa, drei, gsuffa (one, two, three, drink!)* ■



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# Sit back and relax at Lunch Creek Winery in Neshkoro

BY HAYLEY SROKA



Tucked away in Neshkoro is a popular destination known across the state for its Wisconsin-made wine selection. Lunch Creek Winery offers a family friendly atmosphere for your next wine tasting, featuring a unique selection of dry to sweet wines.

Lyn Jones purchased the property from her parents in 2000, believing it was a great destination that would attract more tourists. Little did Lyn know that it would grow into the popular destination that draws in people from across the state. "Our laid back, casual atmosphere is a big draw," shared Lyn, "People love to come here and relax in this rural setting."

Lunch Creek currently offers five tastings for five dollars; where you are able to pick your own flight. Summertime is a great time of year to visit the winery, with live entertainment performed outside and on select afternoons, food trucks will be parked outside, usually 12-4 p.m. or 5 or until sold out.

This summer, Lunch Creek will be hosting several events. Art on the Vine will feature over 20 artisans offering unique items and live music on Saturday, July 20, 2024 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eric Diamond will be making his first appearance at Lunch Creek with a live show on Saturday, Aug. 17 from 2-5 p.m., as do most of their live performances. Check

Lunch Creek's Facebook page for upcoming shows. Celebrate Labor Day weekend with a special performance by Phat Acrobat on Sunday, Sept. 1 from 2-5 p.m.

Whether you are local or traveling through Marquette County, this is a go-to destination for your next group outing. Lunch Creek also hosts parties such as birthdays, showers, bachelorette, or family gatherings. With their delicious wine selection, there is sure to be something for everyone in your party. If you prefer something other than wine, Lunch Creek is now offering a new light lager on tap, Lunch Creek Lager.

Lyn was one of seven children growing up in the Neshkoro and Wautoma area. "The people I have met in this area over the years since opening the winery 10 years ago, make this state the 'Heartland,'" quoted Lyn.

With so many small businesses in this rural area, it may take a lot of time and perseverance to start your own business and keep it running to become successful, Lyn said. With no big-box stores in the area, small businesses have become a staple in the community. You never know what you will find, but you can at least be assured that you are helping support local families and people creating a living. "Buying local keeps our local economy going, and helps employ many people (in our area)," Lyn noted.

Lunch Creek Winery is currently open Wednesdays-Fridays, 12-5 p.m., Saturdays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sundays, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., or by appointment. Lunch Creek is located at W1845 County Hwy E, Neshkoro. To learn more and check latest hours, visit their website, [www.lunchcreek.com](http://www.lunchcreek.com). ■



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# Cheers to three years

*Paradise North Distillery celebrates third anniversary*

BY JANELLE FISHER



Having just celebrated its third anniversary, Paradise North Distillery holds the title of Green Bay's oldest distillery — something Owner Tom Feld said he was surprised to learn when the establishment opened its doors in 2021.

"Oddly enough, there has never been a legal — that's the qualifier — distillery in the City of Green Bay," he said. "I had an opportunity in our first year to do a presentation with someone from the Neville Museum and then the Brown County Public Library and they helped me out and did some digging and they were like 'yeah, we cannot find any record of a

distillery,' which to me was kind of odd. I would have expected with all the breweries and wineries and everything else that somewhere along the line there'd have been a distillery, but there's not, so we're two years in and then that makes us the oldest."

One of the reasons distilleries are not as common as breweries or wineries, Feld said, is the inability to try your hand at the practice at home, like many brewers or winemakers do before jumping into a full-fledged business.

"Distilleries are a little odd in that there is no legal way to do any distilling [at home]," he said. That's allowed to a certain

extent with breweries and wineries, but when we do it we have to kind of find a different route... Because it is illegal to distill at home, it's not like we can start making it and having people over for parties and trying it. So my route was classroom training, online training, whatever I could get my hands on, reading every book that there is out there on distilling, but then also — and importantly — spending time with other distillers. I met a couple here in the state that were willing to share what they know and that was a huge help because without that, I honestly don't know how else you'd figure it out to the point where you can actually make something — and make something that people like and want to buy."

Even with so many breweries in the area, Feld said he doesn't view them as competition so much as opportunities for collaboration — and sometimes cause for confusion.

"We do collaborative projects with some of the breweries," he said. "We work together on things, so we don't really view it as competition. You'd be surprised at the number of people that come in here and don't realize what a distillery is. They'll come in and they'll be like 'okay, what kind of beer do you make?' And we're like, 'okay, well, that's not us. That's not what we do.' So it's been a kind of educational experience for us, educating the city of Green





## All of our products are branded after some of our favorite places that we think other people can relate to.



Bay on what a distillery is and this is what we do. That was a little surprising — the number of people that didn't realize what we actually are and what we make. They're very familiar with breweries, but being the first distillery, not everybody knows what that is."

Feld said even though not everyone knew right away what Paradise North was or what a distillery did, the response from the public since opening the establishment has exceeded his initial expectations.

"I'll refer back to our original business plan quite a bit, just to see how we track," he said. "Our business is significantly bigger than I expected it to be at this time. We're producing more and a larger variety of products than I expected to be doing at this time. I hadn't expected to be making our own bourbon this early in the process, but the demand for that was so great from the day we opened that I jumped into it sooner than I had planned and the response when we released the first one last fall was so great."

It's not only interest in the drinks, though, that has surpassed expectations Feld said, but interest in being in the distillery, which is located at 101 Bay Beach Rd., Suite 5, in Green Bay.

"Our tasting room business is much more than we expected it to be," he said. "We're now expanding into having a small event space because that has been a request that we get repeatedly. So we just recently added on some event space that we rent out for people."

Feld said that even though he's comfortable with the distillery's current operations, he's always looking for new things to work on.

"We're settled in, but there's so much on our to-do list yet," he said. "Some things and opportunities that we recognize and that we can do and other products that we would like to produce and come out with. From an operations standpoint, yeah, we're settled in. We've kind of established a little

bit of a comfort zone, which is nice. But the good thing — and what keeps it fun — is there's always more we can do, so there's always something new that we're working on."

One of those things to work on, Feld said, is the addition of aged products to Paradise North's product lines, but those things take time.

"The biggest thing is just our aged products," he said. "Oddly enough, aged products take time. So the gradual release of some of those things we're putting in barrels. We've got a barrel-aged gin some time before the end of the year that we'll have available. Zambaldi Brewery had used some of our barrels to age their beer and we've got those back. One of those barrels is getting filled with spiced rum, so we'll have a beer barrel aged spiced rum, which I can't wait for and which will be delicious. We just started putting in barrels a new bourbon... It'll be a while before that's ready to release. We did a project with Ledgestone Vineyards. We took some of their wine and distilled it and we've got several barrels of brandy that will be almost two years before we can release it... We're always working on something, and that's what makes this business fun — just being creative and figuring out what we want to make next."

Another place Feld said he's had the opportunity to be creative is in the naming of the establishment itself.

"Paradise North is a reference to our home here in Green Bay," he said. "Ever since my kids were old enough to travel, we've done family vacations to any number of places, but when they got into college, for probably eight-nine years, every March we would spend a week in Florida. We had kind of a running joke when we would travel about who's the first one that's going to use the word paradise to describe where we're at? Because that's how vacations are, you know, you get away from everything and it's just like every place to go is perfect.



And our home started to become referred to as our paradise north. It was a place we always traveled back to and we could find paradise as a family, sitting on our patio in our backyard."

And Feld said the Paradise North theme continues in the naming of all the distillery's products as well.

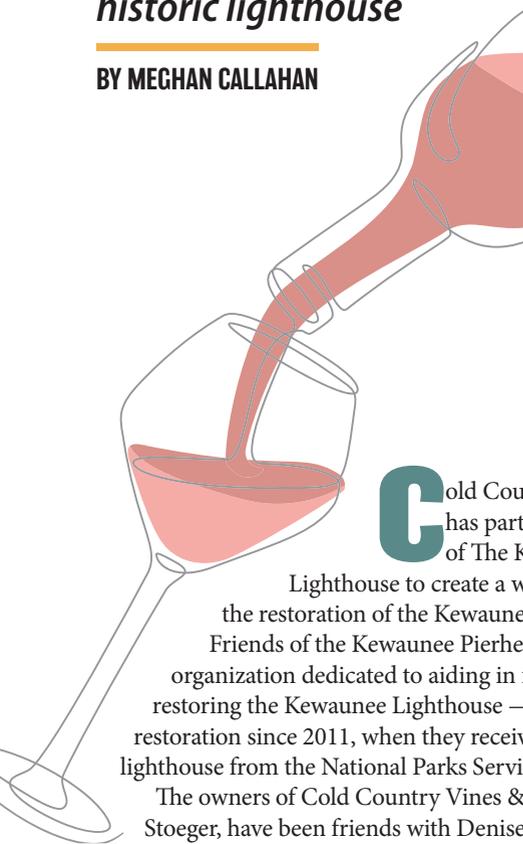
"All of our products are branded after some of our favorite places that we think other people can relate to," he said. "So all of the rums are Beach Road rums — so Beach Road Silver Rum, Beach Road Coffee Rum — and Beach Road refers to when we vacation in Florida, the place we stayed was on Beach Road. Our vodka line is all Essen House, so Essen House Vodka, Essen House Gin, Essen House Chocolate Vodka. Essen is the street that we live on here in Green Bay, so Essen House refers to our home. 10 Mile Bourbon and Old M28 Bourbon, both of those names refer to family that lived in the upper peninsula of Michigan — and we still have property up there. 10 Mile is the river that runs along the property and Old M28 is the road that our cabin is on. So everything kind of ties back into that little Paradise North theme."

Learn more about Paradise North Distillery and its anniversary celebration by visiting [paradisenortheastdistillery.com](http://paradisenortheastdistillery.com) or following Paradise North Distillery on Facebook. ■

# Wine and friends make a great blend

*Wine lovers help restore historic lighthouse*

BY MEGHAN CALLAHAN



Cold Country Vines & Wines have partnered with the Friends of The Kewaunee Pierhead Lighthouse to create a wine that helps benefit the restoration of the Kewaunee Pierhead Lighthouse.

**Friends of The Kewaunee Pierhead Lighthouse photo**

**C**old Country Vines & Wines has partnered with the Friends of The Kewaunee Pierhead Lighthouse to create a wine that helps benefit the restoration of the Kewaunee Pierhead Lighthouse. Friends of the Kewaunee Pierhead Lighthouse — an organization dedicated to aiding in facilitating and restoring the Kewaunee Lighthouse — has assisted with its restoration since 2011, when they received ownership of the lighthouse from the National Parks Service.

The owners of Cold Country Vines & Wines, Kay and Jay Stoeger, have been friends with Denise and Russ Anderson of the Kewaunee Pierhead Lighthouse restoration for several years now.

“They just started coming here about seven or eight years ago and from there we became friends,” said Jay Stoeger about how the relationship began with the couple. “They would bring their dog here... lots of room to run.”

From there the couples began toying with the idea of a partnership which was realized over the past few years.

Planning and preparation for the new wine began in fall 2022 but has only been bottled since this past November.

Stoeger describes the flavor of the wine as being “light and

fruit-forward with hints of passion fruit and pineapple.”

The Cold Country website describes it as a “semi-sweet, white table wine” that contains 11% alcohol by volume.

Kewaunee Pierhead Lighthouse Wine can be found in two Piggly Wiggly stores in Kewaunee, on the Cold Country Website and at the Cold Country Vines & Wines vineyard located in Kewaunee.

A dollar from each purchase goes to the restoration of Kewaunee Pierhead Lighthouse.

In addition to the purpose of donating to the lighthouse, the creation of this wine has placed a spotlight on local artist, Donna Fischer, who was commissioned by Cold Country and The Friends of the Kewaunee Pierhead Lighthouse to paint the lighthouse and landscape for the label.

The painting is based on a photo of the lighthouse and is done in a simplistic, charming style that adds to the apparent efforts put into this endeavor.

The effort displays the community’s dedication to restoring the Kewaunee Pierhead Lighthouse back to its former glory and making it so that the lighthouse is still standing for many years to come.

For more information, visit [www.facebook.com/friendsofthekewauneepierheadlighthouse](http://www.facebook.com/friendsofthekewauneepierheadlighthouse). ■



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# Mary Kate's Wine Bar: a place for reconnection and wines

BY JOSEPHINE HINDERMAN

**A**n Eagle River wine bar that was the result of a need to just take a moment to put a pause on the chaos of life and share a relaxing conversation over a glass of wine wants to put that energy back out into the community.

Amidst the bustle of Eagle River's summer season, Mary Kate's Wine Bar thrives within the busy downtown from where it's nestled at 205 E. Wall St.

Opened in 2020, Mary Kate's is owned by Mary Kate (Katie) and John Hayes.

"When we travel, John and I always like to go to a wine bar, distillery or a brewery to try new things. We like to just sit and talk," Katie said. "Our lives are pretty hectic so when we get a chance to just sit, we can reconnect."

Katie and John have also been owners of the Arrow Gift Shop, right next door to the wine bar, for 20 years, but have been a part of the business for 45.

"I just felt like a wine bar was something Eagle River needed," explained Katie.

Katie described how the original vision of Mary Kate's differs slightly from the bar currently open on Wall St.

"Originally we were thinking more along the lines of a bar from during the time of Prohibition, where you would walk in through a business and the bar was hidden in the back," she said. "We shifted slightly but kept the darker atmosphere, copper ceiling and cellar door between the businesses.

"It is a place for date night, friends to meet up, people to have

a first date or families to reconnect. It is such a joy for us to see this come to fruition when the talking and the laughter fill the bar."

A visitor to Mary Kate's can anticipate a holistic experience that extends beyond simple wine tasting.

With a certified sommelier (or specialist in wine—also





We want our customers to have a wine experience with us. We want to expand on their wine knowledge and expand their palettes as well.



known as a “wine steward”) on staff and a staff knowledgeable in wines (including Katie and John, and one other staff member, studying for a Certified Specialist of Wine exam), visitors can not only expect to taste wines but to be educated on them as well.

“Our focus is on giving our customers a wine experience,” Katie said. “We are not here to just serve a glass of wine, we want to talk about it and educate the customer on what they are drinking.”

While not a restaurant, Mary Kate’s offers charcuterie boards and desserts that are designed to be enjoyed alongside a glass of wine, which can be chosen from a detailed list of 220 wines, including a variety of sparkling, white, red, rosé, dessert, and port wines. These wines come from all over the world and various wine regions.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 44



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“We want our customers to have a wine experience with us,” she said. “We want to expand on their wine knowledge and expand their palettes as well. We like to say, ‘If you like this—how about we try this?’ to get people to expand their palettes.”

In August of 2022, Mary Kate’s was featured in an issue of Wine Spectator as one of its Award of Excellence winners, and Katie said she believes that they’re the only wine bar in Northern Wisconsin to receive such an award.

“It was quite an honor and we received the award again last year. We’re still waiting to hear about this year,” she said. “Being such a new wine bar, it was an honor, and continues to be, for us to be bestowed this award.”

Along with wine tasting, Mary Kate’s offers a variety of monthly activities to visitors.

From September to May there are Wednesday Wine Bingo nights, their Wines & Spines book club meets on the



Mary Kate “Katie” and John Hayes, owners of Mary Kate’s Wine Bar in Eagle River.

Contributed photo

last Thursday of each month, a patio is opened from Memorial Day to Labor Day, and there are occasional live performances. More information on events can be found on the bar’s Facebook page at

[www.facebook.com/MaryKatesWineBar](https://www.facebook.com/MaryKatesWineBar).

Patrons of Mary Kate’s Wine Bar must be 21 years or older.

To learn more about Mary Kate’s Wine Bar, visit [marykateswinebar.com](http://marykateswinebar.com). ■





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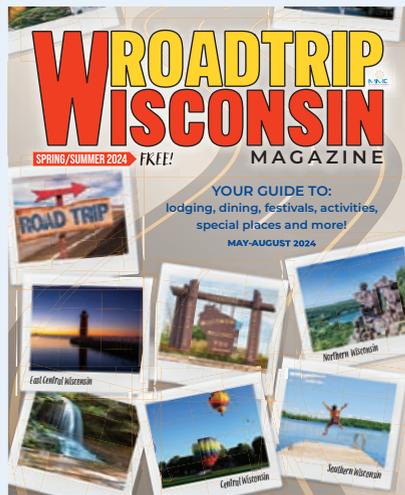
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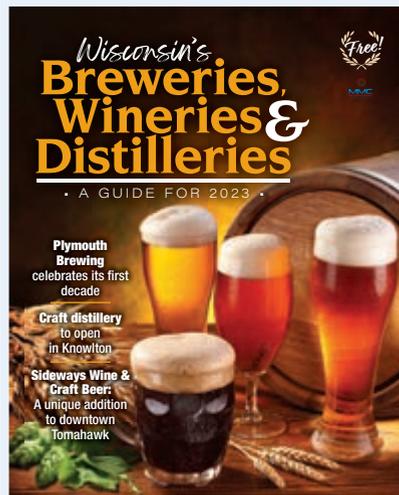


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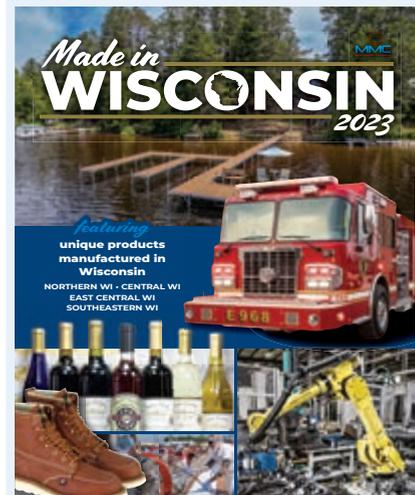
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spot for travelers heading through Plover and Stevens Point. Near the end of the war, the tourist season seemed to grow along with the restaurant, whose service was becoming more extensive, hence the term “supper club”.



Post war booming the 40's and 50's came rather quickly. It was in those years changes were made to the wayside restaurant which helped identify the present Sky Club. In 1950 an innovative self-service, all – you – can – eat salad bar, believed to be the first ever was introduced. It became an identifying benchmark of the Sky Club. Around this time, the slogan, “Heavenly Food Served by Angels” was introduced, and is said to have been started by Tom Leach, a part – time owner/customer in the early 1940's. The restaurant's history of owners, in order is: George Armstrong '35 Marion Nall '40 Louie Jacobs, John Rocco, Louie and Evelyn Schnittger '50 and finally, in 1961, John Freund. Freund, from Neenah purchased the restaurant and operated it until 1965, but died suddenly. It was then his sons, Doug and Terrol who purchased the restaurant and took over where their father left off. In May of 1966, another son Dennis, fresh out of the Air Force,

joined his brothers in the business. Age was their only asset, but in no time, the business was on its way to success. In 1969, Doug decided to pursue other interests, and left the Sky Club. In late November, the restaurant dealt with a severe setback from a fire forcing the business to close until June, 1970. Dennis and Terry responded to the challenge and rebuilt the restaurant again. With the help of loyal customers, dedicated employees, and a few years' time, an additional dining room was added in 1979. In order to do this, the owner's home located next to the business was moved. Additions were added in 1981 and in 1994. With tremendous pride, the Freund's are able to look back at the history of their business. Dennis Freund retired in the summer of 1999 and Terry Freund retired to his other restaurant “Headwaters” in Boulder Junction Wisconsin in the summer of 2007, passing the tradition down to his two son's Patrick and Eric. The Freund's continue the tradition of the Sky Club and want to thank our past and present patrons and employees, for helping us make the first years successful...

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