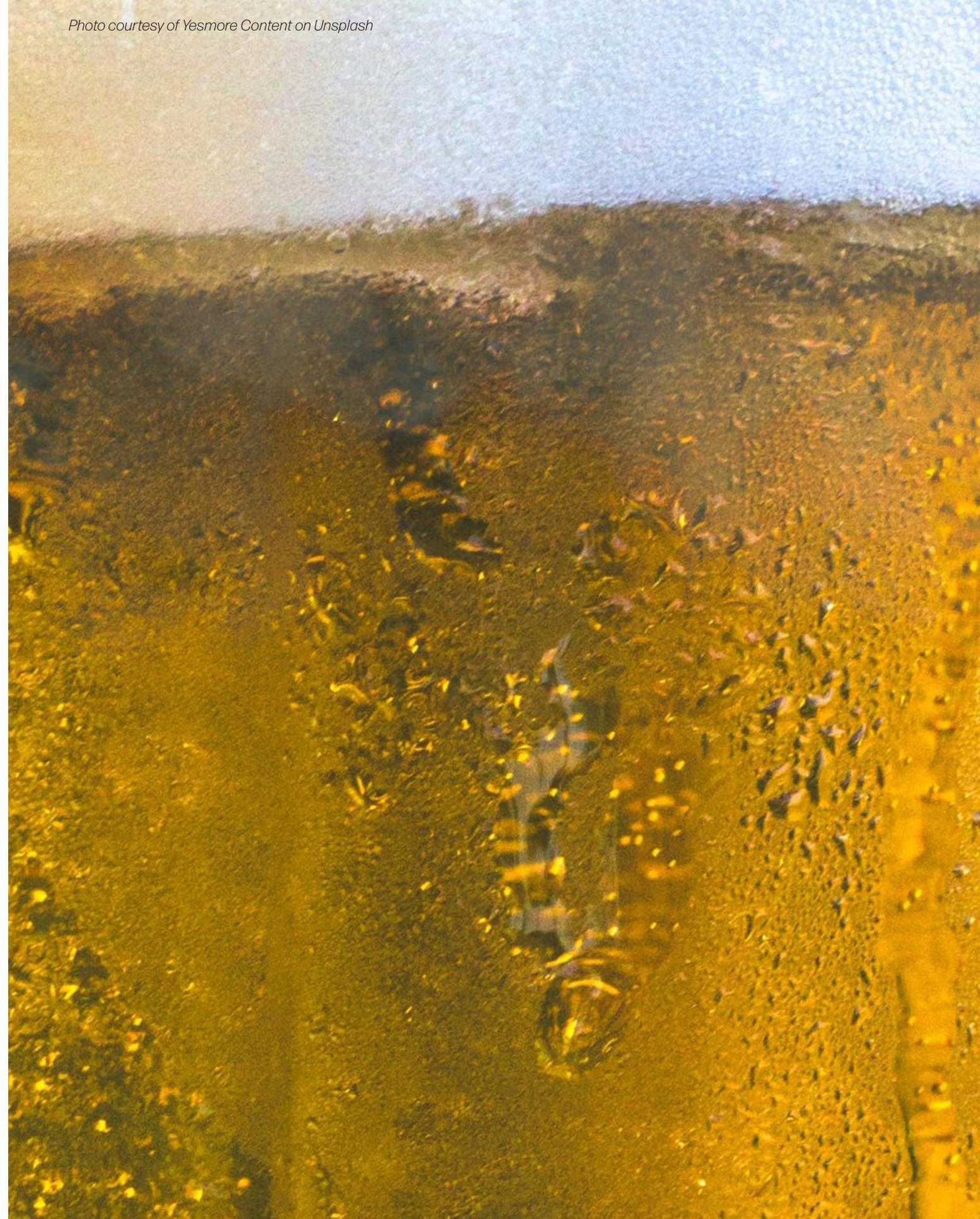


Hops + Barley

A comprehensive guide to beer featuring interviews with local breweries



To my Parents

Thanks for always supporting me and having my back.

Cheers!

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Types of Beer Breakdown

India Pale Ales (IPAs) are probably a lot of people's introductory brew to the world of craft brewing. Their calling card is a high hop content, often with an emphasis on citrus flavors.

Pale Ales still have a high hop content, but contain a lower ABV than IPAs. They are usually medium bodied and easier to drink. English versions are more balanced, whereas American styles place greater emphasis on hops.

ESBs (English-Style Pale Ales) are a common variation of the pale ale. ESB stands for "extra special bitter." This style is known for the balance between malt and hop bitterness. ESBs are earthy, herbal English variation of the hop flavors. Hops are still evident in aroma and color, but the yeast adds a fruitiness.

Pilsners hail from the Czech Republic. They fall into the lager category. Traditional Czech pilsners have a darker color and a bitter taste, whereas German pilsners have a light golden color and a refreshing, easy to drink taste.

Amber Ales are amber in color and can incorporate flavors like toffee, caramel, and nuts. Like the Pale Ale, the English styles focus on sweet barley. The American style centers around hops and more pronounced bitterness.

Brown Ales are like their amber counterpart, but include barley that is roasted like coffee. They yield a more chocolate flavor than ambers but also have the caramelly malt that ambers have. They are typically lower in alcohol, bitterness, and flavor intensity.

Stouts typically have the espresso, coffee-and-cream flavor. Irish and English stouts are typically sweeter, and less bitter. Guinness is one of these. American stouts have dark bodies with creamy, hoppy notes that are popular in American craft beer.

Porters are similar to stouts in that they have a dark body and common ingredients. They tend to taste less like coffee, but have a smoother, chocolatey mouthfeel.

Wheat Beers rely on wheat for its malt content. This gives the drink a bright color and alcohol levels, perfect for relaxing in the summer or pairing with fruits such as lemon and orange slices. Some of the funky and spicy wheat beers are Belgian beers, but those made in the United States have a light taste reminiscent of bread.

Farmhouse Ales come from the farmhouse traditions of Belgium and France. These beers were brewed to serve farmhands and not get them drunk. Beer was typically safer to drink than water. These ales are more rustic, with earthy flavors and moderate bitterness.

Belgium Abbey Ales also come from a long tradition of brewing in Belgium. They will fall into the category of either dubbel, tripel, or quadruple. This term comes from how strong they are. Learn more on page 8.

Sours are usually tart, with the addition of fruits like cherry, raspberry or peach. Sour beers have raised in popularity as of late. They marry sweet and sour perfectly to give you a unique flavor unlike any other beer.

High Gravity Beers are essentially any version of beer just with a higher alcohol content. High gravity beers tend to taste better over time like the old saying "aged like a fine wine."



Photo Courtesy of Kazuend on Unsplash

Fermentation

There are four types of fermentation processes; top, bottom, spontaneous, and mixed. Beer produced through top fermentation utilizes a yeast that ferments at higher temperatures and for a shorter period of time. Bottom fermented beer uses a yeast that ferments at a lower temperature and for a longer period of

time. Spontaneous fermentation is just as its name entails. It ferments without any addition. The process of fermentation is done through lactic acids and acetic acids to ferment naturally. Mixed fermentation is a combination of top fermentation and bacterial flora.

Terms You Should Know

There are three common ingredients in beer that give it its flavor; yeast, hops, and barley.

Yeast is responsible for the carbonation, alcohol content, and natural flavors during fermentation like fruity, spicy, or funky.

Hops are a flower related to the marijuana family. These flowers are soaked in beer to produce citrusy, tropical, herbal, piney, and earthy flavors. Using hops before fermentation brings a bitter flavor to the beer.

Barley is the most prominent grain in brewing. It is used to create the sugar that the yeast consumes to turn into alcohol, also known as fermentation. Barley is also what is responsible for giving beer its bready, wheaty flavors, as well as dark fruit, coffee, and chocolate flavors. Malt is barley specially produced for brewing.

There are three main terms when getting into beer that will help you.

ABV is the abbreviation for alcohol by volume. It is typically a percentage that denotes how alcoholic your drink is. Basically, the ABV tells you how much of the drink's total volume is made up of alcohol.

Imperial is a term for beers that have an ABV higher than 7.5%. These beers are typically incredibly strong.

IBUs is the abbreviation for International Bittering Units. This is the measure of bitterness, measured by 0/no to 100/intensity bitter. There is no limit to how bitter a beer can go, it's up to you to tell what your personal limit is.



Photo Courtesy of Wil Stewart on Unsplash

It's All in the Yeast

In 2017, a survey found there are more than 19,000 beer companies in 208 countries worldwide, the majority producing craft beers. What is the main difference between the styles produced? The difference in types of beer comes down to the yeast used to ferment and the temperature. Ales are created through top fermentation, which means the yeast (*saccharomyces cerevisiae*) ferments at warmer temperatures and settles at the top of the beer. India Pale Ales (IPA) are today's most popular craft beer variety. The calling card is the hops, a plant associated with the cannabis family Marijuana. It gives aromas and flavors such as citrus, spices, tropical fruits, pine and berries. A lager uses a different type of yeast (*saccharomyces pastorianus*) in the fermenting process and settles at the bottom and under cooler temperatures. Lagers are the most popular type of beer, and probably your introduction to beer. Popular lagers include Budweiser, Coors Light, Corona and Michelob Ultra. The profile of lagers is extremely clean, lacking fruit forward qualities found in ales. The flavors in lagers are usually derived from the malt selection and the hops used.

Keg Sizing

A barrel is the standard unit of measurement for kegs of beer. Depending on the brewery, product is kegged in various size containers, as follows:



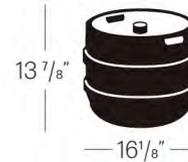
Cornelius Keg
Pints per Keg:
 Approximately 40

Capacity:
 5 gallons/18 liters



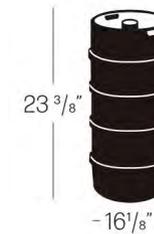
Sixth Barrel Keg
Pints per Keg:
 Approximately 41

Capacity:
 5.16 gallons/20 liters



Quarter Barrel Keg
Pints per Keg:
 Approximately 62

Capacity:
 7.75 gallons/30 liters



Slim Quarter Keg
Pints per Keg:
 Approximately 62

Capacity:
 7.75 gallons/30 liters



Half Barrel Keg
Pints per Keg:
 Approximately 124

Capacity:
 15.5 gallons/58.7 liters

Dubbel, Tripel, Quad; What's the Difference?

What exactly is a Dubbel, Tripel, and a Quad (or Quadrupel) when it comes to beer? These three styles originated in Belgium and have unique, distinct flavors; colors; and different ABV and IBU ranges between them. These ales are often referred to as "abbey ales" or Belgian Trappist ales because of their history. Simply, those are beers which have been brewed for generations—at least the overdue 1600s—at Christian monasteries in Belgium. These ales are defined as Trappist after the Cistercian order known for incorporating beer-making into their self-maintaining communities. The Trappists take their call from the area wherein they based their first actual monastery: La Trappe, that is surprisingly positioned in Northwest France.

The term "Trappist ale," a great deal like "champagne" or "Parmesan" (or "Parmigiana-Reggiano"), is now the subject of strict regulation. Since 1997, the eight foremost ale-generating breweries in Belgium banded collectively to create the International Trappist Association (ITA) to set up formal standards for those beer styles, and to exert higher trademark control over the Trappist designation. The ITA has come to encompass twenty monasteries, consisting of ones in Italy or even the United States (Saint Joseph's Abbey Spencer in Massachusetts). If the dubbel, tripel or quad you're consuming is a real Trappist ale, and includes that distinction, meaning that the beer has certainly been warm-fermented (or top-fermented) and bottle conditioned (or aged) within the monastery, both through the monks or below their supervision, and that the monastery's brewing operations aren't for profit, however assist the

monastery's day-to-day operations and charitable work.

That said, a few dubbels, tripels and quads might call themselves as "abbey beers." Such labeling needs to be understood that the beer itself is within the fashion of a conventional Trappist product. This product has now no longer been brewed through an ITA member monastery, however possibly through a huge business brewer that adopted a conventional Trappist recipe and branded the ensuing beer with the call of both an actual or maybe invented monastery.

The terms used to describe these beers (dubbel, tripel, and quad) represent the strength of the beer similar to how other spirits are labeled. The more alcoholic something was, the more "X'es it had. There is a common misconception that the terms used to denote what it was came from the number of times the beer was fermented.

Dubbels

Dubbels can be somewhat easily identifiable by their dark brown color. They feature sweet malts and often aromas and flavors of chocolate and caramel. They typically have an ABV of 6-7.5% and an IBU of 20-30. This is lower than tripels and quads on average.

Tripels

Tripels are typically pale gold to light amber in color. They are considered the most famous of all Belgian styles. In order for a beer to be a true, genuine tripel, it has to come from an ITA monastery. It is usually a complex yeast-forward flavor and spicy aromas and flavors. Fruit flavors and/or

cloves can also be incorporated. They are on the higher end of ABV with a range of 7-10% and an IBU of 20-45. These beers are not typically hoppy.

Quads

Quads are recognized by their dark amber or brown color. They feature flavors of caramel, sugar, and sweet malts. They typically have complicated and fruity aromas. Sitting at an ABV between 7.2-11.2%, quads have the highest alcohol presence of the abbey ales, which is noticeable in taste. The IBU usually hangs around 25-50 with a medium hoppy bitterness. Although, the aromas and flavors of hops are not as present.



Photo Courtesy of Des Recitson Unsplash



The Exterior



Brewery Vivant

925 Cherry St SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

42.959906, -85.646125



Kris Spaulding

Co-Owner & President of Brewery Vivant and Broad Leaf Brewery & Spirits

I noticed that you have Brewery Vivant and Broad Leaf. What's different between the two?

Everything on purpose. So, Vivant is like more of this classic, we get the inspiration for more of the traditional styles of beers. Classical, more traditional styles with a modern twist is how we like to look at it. And our food is similar as far as the inspiration behind it. So that was what we set out to do, with no intention of a second location. And then, um, for various reasons we ended up with a second location and because this physical space is quite remarkable, right and has its own everything attached to it. Our other one is our warehouse, it's the front of the warehouse. So we knew trying to do Vivant there just wouldn't work, at least not for us. So, we said "okay, let's give it a different identity." And it's all of the more modern styles of beer and street food. So very much more modernized I suppose is the way we talk about it. Like the colors here are more classic, and over there they're more bright, in your face a little more. So that's what makes them different. Here we opened in 2010 and there is 2019. The industry as a whole was in a very different spot.

How did COVID affect Broadleaf?

Well, it sucked. Our grand opening was August of 2019, so we had, you know, whatever that is, six months. We just were like in January or February were like "okay this is what we want to see" as far as numbers in that first year. Then when the shutdown happened, we tried to do carry out only, but we did that at both spots, and it wasn't worth it there. So we brought that chef into this kitchen and just kind of had a mixed menu. But it took us until, I mean really, like a whole year just to get back to where we had started from, or where we

left off I guess. But now it feels like "okay, now it's established itself again." I don't see shutdown happening again. But yeah, the timing wasn't great. And the location, we got it as a warehouse, understanding that we're just off 28th street. So the location is not awesome, you'll have to want to go there. It's not something you'd stumble upon. So you know, that doesn't help either at that time. Anyway, we're back on track.

On average, how much beer do you brew a year, specifically at Vivant?

Like, three thousand barrels last year probably here. Ideally, we'll be at five thousand here. But again, it took the fight out of us.

How many people are involved in the brewing process?

That team? Broadleaf, we have one. At Vivant, I think we have six, maybe.

What was the inspiration to start Vivant?

A love of beer and food. My husband had owned New Holland before and left and realized he missed the industry after a couple years. So, this was us going in it together.

Did anybody start as a homebrewer or anything?

Oh yeah, yeah. He was like in college homebrewing probably when they shouldn't have been. All those stories, you know?

This is probably going to be an impossible question, but do you have a favorite beer on your tap list?

You know, they change so much. It changes by what I feel like in the moment and what we have on the list. I mean, really it's very mood dependent, season and all that.

What excites you most about owning two breweries?

That's a great question for pre-pandemic. Like, it's still been a challenge to be excited. The whole reason, outside of beer and food, that we like this business is that community connection. The relationship we have with our team, the relationship we can have with our neighborhood, and then with our charitable program. I like that a lot, using our business as a way to partner with these nonprofits and support the work that they're doing and being more of a public facing company that allows us to support them in ways other couldn't. We do benefit beers a few times a year. How

awesome that for whoever that partner may be, we've got a can of beer with their logo on it that's trying to tell their story with an audience that may or may not know them. So those are the things I think are exciting.

What nonprofits have you worked with?

We have quite a few, like our longer term partners: Friends of Grand Rapids Parks, Kids Foodbasket, WMEAC, GRPS, Land Conservancy, Pride Center, Wellhouse. I look at environmental as a focus, anything around food security, the housing/homelessness scenario, and then more LGBTQ creative spots, more arts focused. Those are where we tend to focus most of our time and kids.

A selection of beers | Photo courtesy of Brewery Vivant



So, what inspired, I guess, your philanthropic adventures?

The joke has always been that my husband likes making the money and I like giving it away. My background, my education, my bachelors, I thought I was going to end up in the nonprofit sector. So, it's just always been a part of me, right, is that like "how do you better your community and what kind of role can each of us have?" So, turning into the business side, it's a very different approach, but we can support what they're doing and amplify their message. To me, that can make a difference. I've always looked at not everyone will come into our doors, but without the community members that do, we wouldn't exist. There's just some natural need to engage with community in a deeper way through understanding that they are the reason we are here. But because it is only a segment of community, how can we still impact members of our community that will never come into our doors for whatever reason? That's some of the partners that we have, I think, are more focused with that in mind, building these relationships with the underserved population. How can we do something in a way that engages with all community members?

Do you find that this location is ideal for that?

It is a great location for a million reasons. When we finally secured it, it was so obvious because it's in a neighborhood, it's walkable, there's the business district. It serves a lot of different purposes in that way. And it's awesome! You could bike here, you could take a bus here, you might live right down the road. But, like, being in such a small part of Grand Rapids, it's such a different vibe from downtown. It just feels more communal, I think. So yeah, that's been huge here. You know, Kentwood, where Broadleaf is, is the exact opposite. I mean, there's bus lines there,

you could bike there - and some people do - but most people don't feel safe biking around 28th street corridor. There's neighborhoods back there, but it's not really walkable. That's one of the hardest things about that spot is that it can't be what this is. But the way we view that one is there is so much that. Like let's be the thing that's different and feels unique and more special in an area that doesn't have a lot of those opportunities.

What would you say is your most popular beer here?

Farm Hands' our flagship. It's the first one that came out and it's the only one that's still around from the first ones. It is the majority of our sales.

What kind of beer is Farm Hand? What's its style?

Farmhouse ale, we call it. In the spirit of the saison, I think we might actually change it to a saison soon.

How many different beers and styles do you typically brew here?

A lot. I used to, every year we do the sustainability report, we throw some fun facts in there. There'd be like a hundred different beers each year. Right now, we have three main stays and then some seasonals that come back every year, and then some other ones, then we just fill in the one-offs.

How many taps do you have here?

I think there's seventeen.

How many beers are you brewing a week?

It really depends on the week. Not many. We have a twenty barrel system, so that takes up a whole day. If you're doing a double or triple batch, then that takes up



Beach Patrol | Photo courtesy of Brewery Vivant

two days. I think at most they do two brews. I imagine that maybe there's a week that they do three, but I think that would be rare. Broad Leaf has a much smaller system but only so many parameters, they're probably only really doing on a week.

I'm assuming you do a lot of Belgian styles, is that correct?

We do some. We used to do more or try to have everything more in that realm. We've expanded beyond saying Belgian and French to more European. For a long time, we never had a lager because that's definitely not Belgian and French. In the last few years, we've kind of opened that up more to allow some additional styles.

Have you or your husband ever been abroad to Belgium, France, ect.?

Yeah! We were planning what we wanted to do. Jason went to Munich for brewing school for like a two week refresher. Then, I met him out there and we took a tour of the southern-Belgium/northern-French small, community breweries, which was awesome. We had an idea of what we wanted to do but that really solidified a lot of it. Partly the styles, but they were so focused with sourcing locally there. Some of them actually grew a bunch of stuff on their land, which, you know, we can't do that in an urban area. But more of that community spirit and attachment to that locale, that really was a meaningful thing

to experience first hand and just drinking the beer.

Going off of the local sourcing, do you source locally? Where do you get your grains from?

Yeah, we have goals. Our goal for beer is twenty-five percent of our ingredients local. We are definitely not there; some years we get closer. Most of our grain is coming out of western-Canada or U.S. just 'cause that's where it's grown. Michigan has the ability and the right climate, but there's just a few growers right now. It varies levels of quality. We have a commitment to put at least one bag of Michigan grain in every batch. So, one fifty-five pound bag goes in. Depending on the size of the batch, it may not be much but it at least keeps a constant relationship with us and a couple of our suppliers. And then hops. There's a decent amount grown in the state. So we try to use Michigan hops and it makes sense based on the kind of beer. And honey. We're doing our Contemplation, which is a honey one, right now. You know, we have plenty of honey in the state, might as well get it. We try to do what makes sense.

Do you have any fun stories about Broad Leaf or Vivant? A favorite story if you have one?

There's so many stories to tell; more here than there just because it's been open longer. Like, the number of couples that have come out of here; whether it's like guests or staff or whatever. Like that's a fun part of our identity is this community connection. It's fun to see couples happen here or people become friends because they're seated at the community tables and stuck next to someone; and actually really like that person and then they remain friends and can talk about the time they met at the table. Those are fun stories, I like those.

Do you have any special events or anything that you do?

We had, you know, but we're trying to get back to some of that. Like as far as what we have on the docket this year. We always do a "poutine clash" we call it, that's in October. And then we had a nacho one in January. I think we might do one more. Those are fun because our kitchen is all so talented. As a scratch kitchen, they have to know what they're doing. Sometimes they team up, sometimes they're individual. If we have six options, it's different people in the kitchen that have their vision for what a poutine can be or a nacho and then guests come in that day and vote for their favorite; it gets crowned the whatever. So those are fun, it's the back of house, you know you don't see them because they're the back of house, but it's a cool way they can engage the public in some way. Those are fun things. We have some other events like that. We do a wild game weekend, I like quite a bit, right around when hunting opens. We just try to see what interesting proteins we could get. This year we had alligator ribs as one of the dishes, I didn't even know that was a thing. Those are cool. With beers, we used to have our Wood Aged Beer Fest, but that program had to get shrunken down quite a bit. So, we aren't doing that, but we are trying to figure out what beer related events would make sense as a replacement. We'll see; stay tuned.

What is your most popular food item here?

We sell more burgers than anything else. It's a great burger. We get the beef from a farm called Wernette, they're up maybe an hour away. That's one of the things I'm most proud of is that all of that beef comes from this family run farm. We field trip up there each year. They're amazing.

They used to sell a quarter of a cow as a household. We were looking for a local partner for all of our burger meat and steaks and whatnot. It took us a REALLY long time to find them, but we found them. I think we're their only commercial account that I know of. They farm the way that it should be done. It's this beautiful land, the cattle move from one part of land to another. They're actually in a study right now with Michigan State and a couple other universities globally, like there's one in Brazil; one somewhere else, but looking at when you're farming properly, that you're actually sequestering carbon, not creating a bigger carbon footprint. The studies are proving that that's actually true. It's been an ongoing study. Hopefully at some point this year, we're going to get them in Wernette as well as the professors from Michigan State, and have a learning opportunity for people. So anyway, our burger is our most popular and our duck nachos are the other one. We just got "best nachos in the U.S." from Thrillest a couple weeks ago. And those just get attention, duck confit on a nacho. It's yummy.

What beer trend do you wish would just go away?

Seltzer. It's not really beer. It is categorized as such. It is technically a malt beverage. But, if it's taxed as beer, then it is beer. We do not do any seltzers. That one doesn't do much for me.

Is there a reason you don't do seltzers?

Really, there's not a lot of craft in seltzer. We're in it for the craft and the artist feeling of making product.



Canning Time | Photo courtesy of Brewery Vivant

What's your favorite part of running a brewery?

That changes on a regular basis. It's a fun thing to be a part of, right? Just all that community stuff, I like that quite a bit. It's fun, you know, COVID aside. The staff is fun, spending time with people who are passionate about the same thing you're passionate about, there is something unique to that. In other jobs I've had, maybe you have similar skill sets, but your passions stay at home. We're in this type of environment, you're here because of your passion for beer.

How do you come up with new beers to make and how long does it take?

Oh it's all over the place. The brewers have ideas sometimes, we as owners have ideas. We have a production meeting once a week where it's really just working through issues and schedule and whatnot. Sometimes ideas happen there. We have a monthly meeting with our brewers where sometimes we send them an article to read and then see what comes out of that. Ideas come from lots of places.

Have you sent any of your brewers abroad to study?

We haven't yet, but that was one of our goals was to do a brewer exchange program with some friends that Jason had met when he was in Munich. There's two brewers he connected most with. One's in Italy and one's in Nova Scotia. Those would be really fun to make happen, but it just hasn't happened yet. But, it's a dream we still hold on to.

What beer on your tap list would you recommend to a beginner?

We usually start people with Farm Hand. It's very accessible, balanced, not too-malty, not too-hoppy. The whole idea behind that beer and the names is, you know, back in the day they would brew a beer for the farmhands that was usually lower ABV. It was safer to drink beer than it was to drink water. It's intended to be an every person's beer.

Prepping Dessert | Photo courtesy of Brewery Vivant



How did you get into the hospitality business?

Well, that's only only place Jason's ever been. I think they opened New Holland in '98, so that was pretty much what he did right out of college. But he and I both bartended and waited tables and all that during college. Then, I went corporate and came back. His dad was actually a hotel-restaurant management professor until he retired a number of years ago. So, it's somewhere in his family history.

This is kind of a bit of an obvious question, but what sets your brewery apart from the rest?

I think, originally, in 2010, if you thought of a brewery, you thought of drinking beer and having some food on the side. I feel like we've been a part of bringing food into the forefront, so not just having amazing food but having equally exceptional food, and then the third leg of our story is sustainability. I think all of those things are more on trend now, but at the time we were one of twenty-five breweries to watch when we opened. It was weird that we were focused on food, the vast majority weren't talking about sustainability, even though I think community is part of the ethos of most breweries. And we were canning, which at the time no one was canning, and now, like, no one's bottling anymore. We got to be on the forefront of all those things. So, I don't know if they set us apart in the same way anymore, though I do still feel we are on the upper tier as far as quality with our product.

If you're not drinking beer, what are you drinking?

I love champagne. Give me the bubbles anytime. And I do like gin quite a bit. Now that we have our distillers' license, the gin that we have is amazing. I'm quite pleased with that.

What was the reasoning behind getting the distillers' license?

We got it because of the pandemic. We had so much beer that didn't have a home so we figured "alright, they made it easier to get a license," so people could make hand sanitizer, which we did not make. It was easier to get a license and we had hundreds of kegs, so we distilled that. We will be launching that spirit made from what we call our "dead beer" sometime in April. That's exciting. That's all branded under the Broad Leaf name, but Vivant gets it here too. Beer's our primary thing here, there we're trying to build that distillery program to be, not quite equal weighted, but more prevalent.

Do you have any specialties or seasonals? Do you have any that you are looking forward to most?

Yes, we have one as we head our way into the idea that warm will come again soon, we have one call Beach Patrol that is a summer seasonal. It's a nice, easy drinkin' beer with a bit of lime and sea salt. To me, that's summer. It's so good. That'll be coming out in, I think, June. Soon, we'll be releasing our Straw-Barb, which is our strawberry rhubarb, part of our Unapologetic Fruit line. That line I like quite a bit because it's more of shit tons of fruit in it. Those I like a lot. It's a good cross-over drink too for people who don't like beer but "oh, I like cider." Okay, well try this, it's nice. The brewers do such a nice job with those.

What was the inspiration behind Beach Patrol?

Margherita, kind of. There's one from Dogfish Head called Sea Quench, we tried that and were like "oh we need to make something like that." No one locally was doing it, so we picked ourselves. Not quite a Belgian/French inspired beer by any means, but it's good.



Is there any particular way you decide what styles you produce?

Not outside of trying to have this European boundary here. Broad Leaf, we don't really have many boundaries at all on purpose. It's more what sounds interesting. Funny thing is there, that is our more modern, wacky styles of beer. A good segment of our guests are those beer nerd types that are looking for that. But then the other main segment of our guests are Kentwood people, who maybe aren't looking for that. So, it's an interesting mix of more over here beers but balanced with very accessible, simple drinking beers. It's kind of funny that the location has determined some of the styles that we need to make.

Do you serve "Farm Hand" at Broad Leaf?

We try not to have too many Vivant beers there. When they have open lines, they'll fill them in with Vivant beers. They'll have an Unapologetic Fruit on, sometimes they'll have Rapid (our IPA), but they have their own pilsner and some of those. And here we intend to have at least one Broad Leaf beer, but haven't. We're working on that just because the volume that Vivant goes through is pretty large. The system at Broad Leaf is not. I do like some amount of cross-promotion just because it's smart business.

What was the inspiration behind the names?

Vivant, in being Belgian/French focused, we wanted something that sounded French-ish, but the challenge was something that people could pronounce and that meant something to them. We had some regions as an idea. Then it dawned on us one day that people,

foodie-circles of people, the term "bon vivant" is a very familiar term, it means people who enjoy the good life usually in reference to eating and drinking. So, we're like "let's just name ourselves that!" Broad Leaf, that one was a lot harder to name because all the good names are being taken by beers or places. That was like the back-up that ended up having to stick. Our original idea there was being in this concrete jungle area, in a warehouse, we wanted to have a lot of greenery inside so it would feel like you could walk in and feel refreshed in a way. Our real dream would have been to just plant a tree inside. But after talking to people smarter than us about plants, the reality of that would be a lot more challenging than what we could do. You can't put a native tree in there, right? They're deciduous for a reason. Nor could we put a tropical because we can't regulate the humidity. So anyways, we just have a lot of plants and some trees. So all that said, the name came from wanting to pull in nature.

How did COVID affect your business and supply chain?

Yeah, business we're still down like thirty percent probably, from where we should be as far as the Vivant pub and distribution. Broad Leaf is too new to know the impact. We have fewer employees now than we used to, but we have restructured things to make that work now, setting the expectation. The supply chain has hit everybody, like they're saying food on menus are higher than they used to be. I think a lot of breweries are about to do price increases based on the rumor mill. Just like everyone at the grocery store, our prices are up to. We're having to increase prices because of increased cost.

How would you explain the atmosphere here?

Communal. Back to the traditional and all that.

What makes you different from homebrewing besides scale?

I think the spirit of the homebrewer exists with every brewer. I can't imagine any brewer didn't start as a homebrewer. That's true for everyone on our team. I don't think there's too far of a jump from one to the other. The challenge with scale is your ability to experiment. The bigger your brew system gets, the more reduced your ability to experiment is. I think you need to have the education to back up that you know how to create what you intended to with less risk. What I think is great about the homebrewing community is there's so much conversation, passion, and people bouncing things off each other. Ideally, that same thing is happening in your brewery among your brewers and guests or whatever it may be.



The Brewhouse | Photo courtesy of Brewery Vivant



Pouring a Pint



Interior Dining Area | Photo courtesy of Brewery Vivant



Photo courtesy of Cedar Springs Brewing Co.



Cedar Springs Brewing Co.

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Dave Ringer

Director of Happiness at Cedar Springs Brewing Co.

On average how much beer would you say you brew a year?

Normally we do about seventy hundred [7,000] barrels a year, but about five hundred or so the last two years due to COVID.

What ingredients do you typically use? Are they grown locally or imported? How did COVID affect your business?

Well, we're German, so we use four ingredients in all of our beer. We're different than most. You're going to find a lot of, most breweries use all sorts of odds and ends, but we use water, malt, hops, and yeast. That's it. We import some of our grains due to the styles we make, but on our American line we use Michigan grains. We have a few hop growers that are local. We've done some malt, but there's not really a lot of malt here so they're usually special one-off brews when we do malt. And then how did COVID affect? Good Lord, I mean how much time do you have? I mean, in a nutshell, obviously this is awful in our industry, it's awful in a lot of industries. It was a significant disruption for personnel, it was a significant disruption for customers, we've had to change our operations - in many cases - on the fly, and not knowing what funding is. I mean, obviously almost everyone in the business lost a lot of money, but more importantly than that being about to take care and support your people. We've had to deficit spend and a lot of that just to keep people on because you can't just kick somebody out and then expect that you're going to have people back. We wanted to take care of the people that were here. We did everything we could to keep as many of them around, the ones that especially needed it. We were probably different than most because we had some reserves.

It certainly wasn't enough for this sort of thing, but it was enough to get us by until some of the other resources kicked in. We're still not whole. We're still not normal either, we have reduced seating, our service standard is different from what it was.

So I was interested in your title. How did you get "Director of Happiness" and what all does that entail?

Well, you've got to earn the title. Nobody has a quote-unquote title and it's boring to sit around and say "owner," "manager." We just put a little creativity. This industry is fun, you know we really only have four rules here for our employees and the first rule is to have fun. The second rule is make it fun for others. The third rule is to be there, which means you're paying attention to your surroundings, you're aware when something's not right and take steps to fix that. And the fourth rule is to choose your attitude. Almost any job can be miserable if you want to make it so, any job can be a joy if you want to make it so. Whenever we've had any issues, it usually falls under one of those four categories and we can solve it, but the first rule is still have fun. This is the brewing industry and the hospitality industry, so our job is to be hospitable. We try to keep that in mind with everything we do.

What excites you most about this job?

This isn't a job. I mean, for somebody in my position, I was in this industry, I was out of this industry, I was in another line of work entirely. I sold a different business to go back to this. This is a labor of love, this isn't a job. I'm not doing this for the money, the people that are doing this correctly aren't doing it for the money. Something like this is a passion. I was an exchange student in Germany, I spent a ton of time in Germany.

I was born here, but having lived abroad for years and years, it was kind of a goal to share a little bit of that experience and a little bit of that culture and a little bit of that feeling - the Germans have a word for it called *Gemütlichkeit*, which is kind of this warm, fuzzy "isn't this great" feeling where you're sitting around with friends. We don't really have a direct word for that in English, but that feeling is something that you recognize when you have it and something that I enjoyed in that culture. The idea was really to share that with my hometown, you know where I was from, and kind of get people to understand we regularly take our cooking crew, our brewing crew regularly to Germany. They have a chance to experience some of this, experience the food, experience the culture, experience the flavors in their natural habitat to try and get an idea of what we're trying to do here. Obviously we can't go one-hundred percent, we're a small town, so we have a lot of Americanization of things that we do

to make it a little more familiar with locals. This is not a job. If you're doing this, it's something you're passionate about.

What is your favorite beer on your taplist?

I'm assuming you're not a mother? Well, if you were, could you imagine if someone asked you your favorite kid? There's no real such thing. I will say that we have an antique style, a five-six hundred year old beer that's called *bienchen fleißig weissbier* or original wheat beer/*weissbier*. There's only a handful of small Bavarian style brewers that still make that style. I worked for a couple of those when I was living abroad. It's kind of a lost style that we specialize in. So that one's kind of near and dear because I couldn't get it anywhere else, I was always going back and forth to bring cases back, but that doesn't last very long. We joke that we built a brewery to have that beer. That's kind of our flagship, but I like them all.

The Cedar Springs Team Cheers-ing | Photo courtesy of Cedar Springs Brewing Co.





Interior Dining Area

What's your favorite food item on the menu?

We have two sides on our menu, we have an American side and we have a German side. It's kind of broken up. This is really just an American smokehouse pub style menu, very familiar. We're in a small town, people here just want a pub menu. There's some wonderful items on there. I'm probably particular to...oh I can't even start to say which one I like... I like the black bean wrap, I like the brisket, I like the Cedar melt, I like the salmon. The fried chicken's really good. But then the backside, this is directly from upper Bavaria, *Oberbayern*. So this menu, you could stick - obviously we translate it - you could stick it in a place in Munich and no one would miss a beat, it would be very, very normal. That's all German stuff. The *Jägerschnitzel's* probably one of my favorites. The *Leberkäse* is really good. But some of these things people can't pronounce, so it's exotic to some people maybe if they're not familiar with this style of food. We have a dichotomy. You know, our beer menu's the same way, a German menu and an American menu. We find a lot of the time, the destination people are really after this [German cuisine], and the locals are really after this [American pub-style cuisine].

This is a bit of an oddball question, but who's your favorite regular?

Again, that *Gemütlichkeit* is a feeling of friendship and of warmth and community. That's historically the reason for pubs and public houses. It was the Facebook of its day. You didn't have social media or even really good newspapers sometimes, the "old days." The pub or the public house, in German the *kneipe* or *stube*, was the place that people did gather where they exchanged news and ideas and stories, triumphs and tragedies. That's one of

the things we work hard to do up here. We don't have TVs that are on, we have a lot of community tables. Again, it's less than it was before COVID, a lot of the big tables are actually out right now. One of the joys is seeing somebody sit down with somebody they don't know, and by the end of their meal they're actually having conversation. In many cases, we've actually made new friends that never knew each other and now are suddenly meeting up here every Tuesday. And they've had a friendship that's maybe grown about that, maybe they've lived here their whole lives but they never really met each other and now suddenly they have. Fostering those relationships is really one of the magical things that you see happen in here with regulars. We're blessed, we're in a small town, obviously we're close to a large community. We're busier in the summertime, we have destination people that come in the summertime. In the wintertime, it's a lot more local or weekend heavy. As you develop that crew of regulars, we're probably a bit more regular-centric than maybe some places are that are more transient. So we have a lot of regulars. It's hard to say a favorite. It has been a joy watching a lot of those, and you've created a lot of new friends because of this too. I have a little bit of an issue because I'm out and about and people go "hey Dave" and I'm like "I don't know who that is" but it's somebody that knows you from here.

What beer trend do you wish would just go away?

I could start a list. Seltzers. That kind of is. Hazies. We're weird. I could appreciate a lot of them, but again we [in a German accent] *being German are not putting fruits and spices, and other tricks in our beer*. I think trends would probably be the biggest

thing. There's an effort in craft to always be ahead and constantly have a new hit record. I understand why, but a lot of places are constantly just trying to put something new. Brewing is an art and a science, much like cooking. Consistency and quality is ultimately going to be what's carrying the day. A lot of the loud news and stories are about the new and the trendy, that's rarely something that's going to last the test of time or be around for very long. We're not here to make pop records, we're here to make standards.

What is the first thing you do after a long shift?

I just want a beer. Of course we do! Mine aren't really shifts in my role. We usually sip a beer and sit with friends.

What is your favorite part of brewing?

I think enjoying the people, the reaction, seeing people react to what you do. That's the cool part. There is physical appreciation of moving and hauling, working with your hands. I have to say, too, I don't physically brew anymore. I did. I started thirty seven years ago, but I don't physically brew.

What on your tap list would you recommend to a beginner?

The original. That's something that is unique, it appeals to a lot of people who typically don't like beer. There's really nothing else like it. It kind of crosses a bridge between crafty and non-craft drinkers, even Bud Lite drinkers or whatnot. We get a high percentage of them like "oh, normally I don't like this craft beer and this is okay, I can drink that."

I think a lot of what causes people to avoid craft beers is it's usually IPAs.

Well, IPAs are big flavors. Commercial beer is made to be non offensive. Nobody has a spoonful of Chef Boyardee spaghetti and says "AUGH it's terrible," they go "there's not much there," or a McDonald's hamburger, or KRAFT macaroni and cheese. These products are mass products and they are made to be non offensive. They're made to have the widest possible appeal of people that can eat them and that's why children eat a lot of these things. Why do children eat grilled cheese? Because it's non offensive, there's nothing to it. The same thing is said with commercial beer. Commercial beer, your Buds and your Coors Lights, are made to be as light and easy drinking. A lot of times they are very highly carbonated and served super cold to be refreshing, so the mountains turn blue and everything else. They're using marketing to create differentiation when there really isn't any in the product. This happened in our industry after the war and prohibition when you had further consolidation in the industry and mass-marketing went into the system. You had a very vibrant American beer market that literally had thousands of local, original beer styles and variations often using local ingredients. It was watered down to really one style, American light lager, and they were all using marketing and branding to create a difference when there really wasn't one. They were all the same style and they were using cheaper and lighter, and lighter ingredients called adjunct, which was rice or corn. If you watch Super Bowl advertising, it's rice syrup versus corn syrup. They're much more efficient ingredients. No blame, but that's what they do.



Cedar Springs Merch | Photo courtesy of Cedar Springs Brewing Co.

Craft is an entirely different thing. Craft is made to be flavorful. By definition, some people are going to like some flavors and not like some flavors. But going back to the root of your question, a lot of the big, bold flavors, some of your roast malt beers or your big, dark, heavy beers, the very hoppy beers which tend to be bitter. Bitterness in human nature was a sign of poisoning. People didn't like bitterness because it was usually offensive and warned them that something might actually be dangerous. It's an acquired taste, but people that do get into hops. Obviously a lot of people do, it's the number one craft style, an IPA of some version. Although not all IPAs are bitter nowadays. That certainly can be offensive to some that isn't used to these and consuming these styles of beer. That said, a lot of the stuff we make is much, much more balanced. On the German side, it really is about balance of ingredients and subtlety. There's a lot of really intriguing and interesting flavors in some of these beers. They are very nuanced, you're not going to hit you in the head with a two by four. They're going to be "I'm just sitting around having a couple beers with my friends and talking" or it's like "wow, there is a little bit of a nuttiness there, there's a little bit of caramel-toffee there, there is kind of an herbal nose to that. They're just kind of a subtle thing that if you want to enjoy it or pair it with food, it pairs up very, very well. Yes, people who are into may have been

put off by a bad experience, but that is one of the really cool things about good, local places. You can always get a little taste and/or talk about flavors and/or pair up with foods. A lot of times it does create a new experience. People that say "I don't like beer," you hear that once in a while—it's weird, I don't understand it—the rebuttal is you just haven't met the beer you like yet. A lot of times it's just trial and error and that's fine if some people don't want to make that effort. That's their personal choice. If people are truly interested in exploring and they look at flavor, I think the number one mistake beer drinkers make now is drink with their eyes. Because color has absolutely nothing to do with flavor, it comes to the essence of a beer. You can have very, very light beers that are dark in color, when I say light; light in body, light in flavor that can be dark in color. And vice versa. A common factoid, Guinness (which most people are familiar with) has fewer calories and less alcohol than a can of Budweiser. That's surprising to many people because it's a dark beer. That doesn't mean anything, really. Irish beer by its nature and for legal reasons tends to be very low in alcohol anyway. Color just really means nothing for the experience and many, many people look at a beer and drink it with their eyes and anticipating and pre-judging without ever actually tasting it.

Another great trick and to truly get bitterness is to drink with your nose plugged. Try a sip with your nose plugged and you will discern the difference between actual taste; which is salt, sweet, sour, bitter, umami; and flavor. Flavor comes from the olfactory senses, it comes from your nose. If you open that back up, now suddenly it's a different experience. You can differentiate aromatics from flavor. What we perceive as flavor is a

combination of those things. When we separate them, it's an interesting little exercise we do with tastings.

How did you start brewing?

I started as a homebrewer. We all had Charlie Papazian's book, *The Joy of Homebrewing*. I started in 1988. It was a little something I could do with my dad, similar to your story. And I got interested in it. I became interested in partially the science of it and creating something, the cooking side of it, but also in the history. Beer is a social lubricant. If you want to take some time, you could explain the history of humanity in beer. Whether it's the movement of humanoids from hunter-gatherers, not in an effort necessarily to bake breads, but because they could make beer, and the pursuit of grains and agriculture so that they could make beer or wine depending on what part of the world they were from. The industrial revolution was led by beer. Exploration in many ways was led by beer. There's always the story of the Mayflower stopping at

Plymouth Rock because their rations had depleted, primarily their beer. You can make arguments of the stories, the history of people, based on beer. So that part was interesting to me. I was an exchange student, I lived in Germany, and obviously experienced some different beers from what we had over here. I started working in a brewery, started entering the educational system, and started apprenticing and actually learning the craft. It was an evolution that was in the mid nineties. And then I came back to Michigan to start a brewery in the late nineties that never worked out. Then I ended up getting a real job before coming back.

Were you always brewing German?

No, I've done everything. Sure, I like beer and I like the experience of it so I do enjoy all of it or I at least enjoy experiencing all of it. Again, everybody has their own personal preferences in flavors, but I, again, tend to come back to whether it's an English style, German style, or Belgian style. I tend to come back to classics versus the sky blue

pink with yellow polka-dots and some of the parlor tricks that we see out there, but that's a personal preference.

Very obviously, you do a German style here. My dad does Belgian, 'cause we are Belgian.

Well if you look at the classic beer styles, Michael Jackson (the drinker, not the dancer) was the first one to really popularize and catalog beer styles, if you will, with his beer hunter series of books, which have been translated into multiple languages. Of his classic eighty beer styles, about half of them were Belgian. At that time, the Belgians were willing to take and experiment with traditions from all over. Of course, the U.S. has gone way, way above and beyond that. There's, depending on your source, the BJCP [Beer Judge Certification Program] has about one hundred and ten different styles, but there are numerous variations on all those. There's three-four hundred classic styles out there. It's ever evolving, it's like baseball. It doesn't end. It's a never-ending story when you get into it. Heck, I don't even have the time to go and try all the locals anymore, much less what's out there in the world.

What's your favorite story to tell about working here?

It is a story here, I don't think there is any one story. I certainly like telling the story of Christoph Küsterer. He was the original German brewer here in west Michigan and that's what our German beers are named after. His family got out of the business in 1893, well they were still in it, the name dropped out of it in 1893. They got out when Michigan went dry in 1916. His tradition lasted almost a century here, but in the modern world almost everybody has forgotten who he was and what he did here

for a long period of time and what he built here. It was kind of cool that we were able to publicize his story so that people don't forget who he was.

If you're not drinking beer, what are you drinking?

Oh, I'm an equal opportunity imbibor. I enjoy a little sip of bourbon every now and then. I drink wine. I drink pretty much everything. Again, even with my spirits, I don't like sugars and mixes and all that. I tend not to mix things. If I have a cocktail, it's going to be with ice cubes.

Do you have any specialties or seasonals?

We do. Historically, brewing was seasonal. In fact, in Germany for a long time, you could not brew during the summer. It was illegal. That was before refrigeration. They knew the beer did not taste as good in the summer. What they were doing was isolating lager yeast as opposed to ale yeast. Inherently due to weather and availability of ingredients, brewing was historically a seasonal art prior to mechanical refrigeration. So of course we follow in that. We have our starkbierzeit coming up, which is the strong beer time. We release our bock beers in the spring. Obviously when you get into the fall, you look into Oktoberfest beers. Those are very common. Usually there's a series of dark beers in the winter. We do some Belgians in the summertime.

Just doing this project, I've found there are a lot of really interesting breweries in the greater Grand Rapids area.

Oh yes, absolutely. Some of them are going to have more variety. We focus more on less quantity of variants and more quality. Really, in our history I think we've done

Award Winning Beer, Award Winning Team | Photo courtesy of Cedar Springs Brewing Co.



forty-eight different beers, which is really nothing for some places. An Oddsides or Short's is going to do that much in a quarter that much variety. We really do probably twenty something varieties in any given year. We're not built on always something new. We usually have one or two seasonals on at any given time. Right now we've got a Munich dunkel lager, we've got a schwarzbier, a black lager, on right now as a seasonal. We've got two bock beers that are going to be coming, Appreciator Doppelbock and a Pale Weizenbock, that are going to be coming in March. Most of everything else is our standard. There's ten-twelve that are consistent.

I was going to ask about your staples.

Well, we're known for our specialty of brewing Bavarian style wheat beers, but we also have a lager series. We always have a series of lagers on. Then we have some English beers, so we have an Irish stout that for whatever reason has taken off and done well. Of course we have a couple. We always have a pale ale and an IPA or two. We have those for people that enjoy those styles.

What number of beers and styles do you produce?

I mentioned that. We carry forty-eight total beers over the time we've been open, seven years. That's not that many when you compare to a lot of other craft brewers. We have sixteen taps, two of those are wine lines, so we have fourteen beers at any given time unless we have a specialty on cask of something. About two-thirds of the menu at any given time is German.

What specialty do you look forward to?

I look forward to all of them. Again, historically it's seasonal. Those styles tend to coincide with weather and atmosphere. When the springtime comes, gosh darn

it, a bock beer tastes really good. When you get into the fall, gosh darn it, a märzen tastes really good. Wheat beers taste great all year round, but a lot of people look forward to the lighter wheat beers, the real fruity ones, in the summertime. The association with those is a summer beer. Belgians taste great in the summertime, or all year round. Actually, a stout tastes great in the summertime too. I think as a general rule, darker beers, and less flowery beers, tend to taste better in the colder months. The more estery, fruity, lighter beers tend to taste better in the summertime. A lot of it is dependent on what you're eating or what you're doing. Beer is part of any experience. Like I said, a lot of times it's "oh that's the greatest beer" but you were sitting around with friends, you just had a great meal, and goodness it just fit, it was perfect. You might try that beer again and "oh it's not as good as it was the last time." Well, part of it is what you're doing and what the atmosphere is, where your attitude was, what you were eating, how it pairs up. German beer pairs up really, really good with German food. A lot of those things are magic of the moment.

How many brewmasters do you have?

Well, brewmaster is a degree. There's very, very, very few brewmasters in the United States. They're brewers. A brewmaster is a diploma. There's only a couple places that award those, German, England. So, that said, our brewing team is two full time people. We have a head brewer and a brewer.

How is your process different from homebrewers besides the amount you produce?

We're German, so our process is different from almost all the craft brewers. Most of them are English style systems. If you're a homebrewer, they do straight infusion mash, so single temperature mashing. We are steam heated and we mash into our

cooker. We do step mashing or decoction, which is unusual in the craft world. It's a little more expensive to set up and it can be more difficult. There's some debate whether it's totally necessary, but we feel we're getting more flavor out of the malt and more subtly and nuisance in the final product. Turning sugars and grain into fermentable wet goods that become beer is the same process. But, obviously we have some steps in there that we're doing. We use open primary fermentation for our weissbiers, so that is also a little different. We're trying to get that phenol development, so you're getting some of those banana, close, nutty flavors that you're looking for in a weissbier.





A Growler | Photo courtesy of Cedar Springs Brewing Co.



A Selection of Beers | Photo courtesy of Cedar Springs Brewing Co.



A Selection of Sides | Photo courtesy of Cedar Springs Brewing Co.



The Taps | Photo courtesy of Cedar Springs Brewing Co.



Exterior



Schmozh Brewery

2600 Patterson Ave SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

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Laurie Schwerin

Co-Owner of Schmohz Brewery

Do you know on average how much you brew here?

Totally brewing? We have root beer and nonalcoholic too. The rootbeer is probably the biggest chunk we make here. In fact, I know for a fact it is.

I'm assuming that's your most popular item available then?

Out the door, yes. Not in here, no. In here, it's all beer drinkers.

How many people are involved in the brewing process?

One, my husband brews it all. My kid comes and helps every once in a while, but mainly it's my husband.

Do you have a favorite beer on the taplist?

Right now, it would be either the Pinkle Tink or the Pineapple Forgiveness.

Do you have any fun stories to tell?

It's kind of like "Cheers." We actually celebrated the Super Bowl yesterday and we decided to give out awards last night to the members. The little ducks you see were the awards. We had ten awards that we managed to give out. One of the guys, he lives in Florida, got "furthest distance traveled." He renews his mug every year, comes into Michigan three-four times a year.

How much does it cost to have a mug on the wall?

Forty-five dollars for the first one, and then forty dollars to stay on the wall every year.

What's the benefit of having one of the mugs?

Cheaper prices. They get a dollar off beers in here. They do not get anything off bottled

product, but they do get it off growlers and kegs. We have a lot of mug club members that are kegerators.

Best seller beer-wise would probably be the Hopknocker. It is an Imperial IPA, close to ten percent alcohol.

How hoppy would you say it is?

Very. It's got four different types of hops in it. Ours is not very citrusy, ours is sweet. It's got a lot of sugar in it too.

How did you come to own a bar and brewery?

I call it my husband's midlife crisis. He kept saying "can we open a brewery? Can we open a brewery? Can we open a brewery?" And I kept saying "no, no, no." And then he found one for sale and bought it while I was up in the UP. 'Calls me in the UP and says "honey, I bought the bar!" WHAT?! But at that point, we only had half the building. West Michigan construction was in the other half of the building. Seven years later, we bought the building, something like that. We've been here seventeen years.

Where does "Schmohz" come from?

It's a name my husband and his friend picked back in the '80's. If we ever owned a brewery, what would we name it? This is the name they picked. Literally, they had four and a half pages of names and this is the one they had circled.

How did your husband get into the hospitality business?

He was a homebrewer. We lived in Germany for three years and pretty much when we came back it was "alright, I'm ready to open a brewery."



A Pork Chop in Every Pint | Photo courtesy of Schmohz Brewery

Did he do any apprenticing in Germany?

Nope. Automotive industry. He was just like "I could make good beer."

I'm assuming because you traveled to Germany, your beers are Germin in style?

Nope. Not at all. Mainly ales. He likes ales.

How many beers and styles are usually produced?

Depends on his mood. Three styles I would say: lagers and ales mostly. We have sixteen taps. We always have at least one in the back that's not on tap because we just don't have enough taps. We also always try to have at least one fruit on tap, which means no hops. The pineapple's the one that's the fruit on right now. We always have at least one of them on for those people that don't like hops.

When you're not drinking beer, what are you drinking?

I drink wine. My husband drinks bourbon.

Do you have any seasonals?

On tap right now, yes: the porter, the miracle, Oktoberfest - which is almost gone, and the coconut.

What are your year round staples?

The cream, the amber, the ESB, the Hopknocker, the IPA, the pale, Pinkle Tink. All my girlfriends invested in the bar because of the strawberry wheat. It used to be a summer beer. So many of the women would complain that it was a summer beer. It is now a staple on the regular menu.

What specialty or seasonal are you looking forward to the most?

Probably the pilsner. It's a great summer drink. They guys are all like "when's the pilsner coming out?" I'm going "he's gotta brew it first, guys." The grain just got here last week.

How would you explain the atmosphere here?

Friendly. Some people would say it's not, but pretty much it's friendly. The regulars all talk to new people. It's very diverse.

Do you offer any special events?

The mug club members get four parties a year, one being the Super Bowl. It's the only time I open up on a Sunday and it's just for mug club members. Other than that, I have been known to rent it out for private parties on Sundays because we're closed.

What would a private party here entail?

Me bartending. It's a private party, it's closed to everybody but them. We've done a couple of after wedding parties.



Jim Schwerin

Co-Owner and Brewer of Schmohz Brewery

On average, how much beer do you brew?

Recently, it's been down. We're down to about four hundred barrels a year. Partly COVID, partly because of the competition out there. We've done as high as fifteen hundred barrels in the past.

Your wife was telling me, you're the only one involved in the brewing process?

Yes. At this point, yes. We get help when we do bottling because there's extra bodies needed. Volunteers come in, the regulars, they get to drink beer and help out.

What excites you most about this job?

Having the people enjoy the beer. Making a good beer and having people tell you you're making a good beer is nice.

Do you have any fun stories about this place?

There's a few. Fun that I can tell? One of the earlier ones is kind of cute. When we were first opening the place, we were in here working on it and had some friends come over to help. Some college friends were over helping me remodel and do whatever we were going to do. Max kept saying "my buddy owns a brewery, my buddy owns a brewery." He was just excited about it. Then we had t-shirts made. Those actually sold really well. People would come up and buy the t-shirt and then have to come find me to introduce themselves so they could actually say they knew the guy. Everybody says they want to own a brewery. No, you want to have a buddy that owns a brewery that way you get to enjoy it. You help out when you feel like helping out.

What beer trend do you wish would go away?

Hard seltzers. Those I'm just not a fan of.

What's the first thing you do after a long shift of brewing?

I'd say have a beer, but I usually have one before I'm done. Usually, I brew in there on Saturdays and maybe Sundays. I usually just go get something to eat and have a drink. It's not a hard day, it's a long day. It's not real physical, it just takes a lot of time. You're not too tired from it being physical, you can go home and relax and have a drink.

What's your favorite part of running and owning a brewery?

Actually, our mug club parties are becoming one of the fun events we do where we get the members together. They can actually spend a little more time socializing.

Whose idea was it for the mug club?

Well when we opened, there were other breweries who were doing something similar. It was a common thing to reward your members and locals for coming in. They buy a mug and get discounts on the drinks. Other people were doing it when we started.

How do you come up with new beers?

Sometimes, we have a name and we decide to find a beer to make to go with it. Other times, people say "oh you should make this." I'm working on a Russian Imperial stout right now. We did a small batch of it and it was a little too sweet and didn't ferment out completely. I've got plans to do a bigger batch in the summer. We're still working on a name. I think we had one, but I didn't write it down so I forgot it.



The Six Brewers | Photo courtesy of Schmohz Brewery

How long does it take to come up with a new beer?

Depending on if you just want to try it, it doesn't take that long. You research the style, find a couple recipes that you like, then blend them. Then really to make a beer, we do a five gallon batch. You buy the ingredients and you make that within a week. In a couple weeks, it's ready to drink. Now if you have to refine it, each batch takes about a month to go through. Yeah, you spend about a week researching and then try it out. You could spend a lot of time trying to fine tune it, but just make it. Then you've got something to drink while you're figuring out how to do it better next time.

What beer on your tap list would you recommend to a beginner?

If they're new to craft beer, completely new and used to just drinking the domestic beers, our Valley City cream ale is similar in style. It's got a little more body than the typical domestics have. If they're into craft beers a little bit, then you go onto the IPAs or pales. I don't recommend stouts right away. You'd be surprised that a lot of people that don't drink beer don't like the domestics. You give them a stout, something that doesn't have a whole lot

of hops and some smokiness or coffee flavor, they actually like those dark beers better. People that don't think they like beer actually do. If you can drink coffee, you can drink a dark beer. If they don't like Budweiser, well this stuff doesn't taste like Budweiser.

How did you get into the hospitality business?

I wanted a brewery. I was making some beers that were turning out really well. Back in the early 2000's, the brewing business wasn't that big. We had a few breweries we would go to. They would have one beer you could drink, but nothing great. I was making three beers that were really good consistently.

What were your first three?

Well, we have the Pickle Tink on tap. That was one of them. Our Oktoberfest was another one of them. And the ginger beer, that's not actually on tap right now, was the third one. The pineapple ginger is a variation of it. So yeah, we're still making those after all these years.

The name Pickle Tink, where does it come from?

We were making the beer, it's a strawberry wheat beer, and we were sitting around talking with some mug members late at night, after hours. We were just sitting around happy, just talking, and we were talking about this beer. It came from "Tickled Pink," this strawberry wine that was around at one point. Gary and Tracey were sitting here and Tracey goes "you should call it Pickle Tink!" Then she drew a little picture of a pickle in a tu-tu, which is the logo we have today. We came up with it in the middle of the night. No pickles were harmed.

How did you start here?

I was homebrewing. My buddy and I were going to breweries and decided we wanted to open a brewery. I looked at a couple places where I lived, which was on the east side, actually put an offer on a building, and they rejected the offer. This was a brewery that came up for sale and I was talking, emailing back and forth with the guy I was going to hire as a brewer. He said "hey, there's such a place in Grand Rapids for sale." I contacted the owners and made some arrangements. Here we are!

Where from the east side are you from?

Holly area.

What sets your brewery apart from the rest?

I think the beer tastes better. That's just me though. One of the other things for a lot of the breweries is larger equipment. Our brewhouse is actually a lot larger than most of the breweries around here.

If you're not drinking beer, what are you drinking?

Bourbon. Anything in the twenty-thirty dollar range is pretty good. We tried some of the cheap stuff, I wouldn't recommend that.

How many brews are you brewing currently?

We have sixteen beers on tap. We generally go through those sixteen and then we rotate seasonals. We'll do twenty to twenty-five different beers throughout the year.

How many styles do you do?

Probably about sixteen when you look at styles. You'll go to places that'll have five or six different IPAs on tap, we've got one and one Imperial IPA. We've got stouts, porters, ESBs, and ambers. We don't focus on any one style, we try to do all the different styles. We've got a wheat beer now, we do Scotch ales, old ales, we've got a pilsner coming out in the spring.

Are there any seasonals you are specifically looking forward to besides the pilsner?

Besides the pilsner? The guy at the end is looking forward to our Scotch that's coming back next fall. It just went off tap recently, can't wait for it to come back. Normally the Pickle Tink was a seasonal, it was a summer beer, but it's been so popular that we've been treating it as a year round beer. That's normally one that we bring out. The Oktoberfest is always really good. We usually try to keep that as long as we can as well because it's a really nice beer.

Have you ever trained in Belgium, Germany, England?

No, I have not trained there, but we lived there for three years. We visited a few breweries and drank a lot of beer there. I'd love to go again.

How did that influence your brewing?

It's funny, I liked the German beers, but there wasn't much variety. Our craft beer here, you get so much variety. They have their pilsners there, their standard beers. You get dark, you get light. You don't really get the IPAs, Imperial IPAs, the stouts as much, not in Germany.

What is your brewing style, German, English, Belgian, all of the above?

All of the above. We have an English IPA, we do a Czech pilsner, probably more Americanized style if there is such a thing. Like I said, we try to produce just about everything. We don't do sours, not a preference. There's some yeast and stuff that's in the sours that make them sour, that somehow if it got into my other beers it would ruin those. You try to keep some

of that bacteria completely out. It makes those good, but makes everything else not good.

What was your inspiration behind starting a brewery?

It was just making better beer than I could find. I was making better beer than I could buy.

How did you decide what particular styles of beers you would produce?

We try to make sure we've covered a lot of the styles. Like I said at the beginning, I got a lot of requests for different beers and eventually we try to make some. We get a lot of help from our regulars. "You should make something like this."

What is your year round staple besides the Pickle Tink?

What we keep year round? We try to keep the cream ale, which is our light beer, we call it our gateway beer. The pale ale, the IPA, the amber, the Treasure Chest [ESB], our Bonecrusher [stout], and our Hopknocker (the Imperial IPA) are generally the year round flavors. The blood orange



Some Mug Members' Mugs | Photo courtesy of Schmohz Brewery

pale is probably going to stay around as a staple, it's just a really nice beer. Pickle Tink stayed because they really liked it. These guys want the Scotch to stay around.

I'm going to ask probably an impossible question to answer, what is your favorite?

Depends on the time of day. In the afternoons, I drink the Zing or our Pineapple Forgiveness, which is our ginger beer. In the evenings, I'll usually drink the pale or the blood orange, may or may not mix it with something. Blood orange is mixed with cream ale, it tastes really delicious. We call it the orange whip.

What ingredients do you use?

The main ingredients are the pale or two-row malt. That's the bulk on any beer that's going to have that two-row grain. It's all your sugars and whatnot for the beer. Depending on the style of beer, we use some chocolate malts or red malts or caramel malts depending on the style and what you want to make out of it.

Are your grains locally produced or imported?

They're imported. We buy them through a distributor out of Chicago. Our basic two-row comes from a Canadian malting company. Some come from other places, it just depends on what we want to get.

How did COVID affect your business and supply chain?

Not so much supply chain, but obviously when restaurants are closed we're not selling beer here or out for distribution. We're just now just starting to see people getting back used to going out again. Even as the restrictions were being lifted, I think people were used to being home.

People used to go out every night. Now, they're used to being at home. People aren't getting out as much and they're not staying out as late.

Do you have any special events besides the mug parties?

We used to do a 5K run in the spring. We've done that every year since we opened until COVID. We're trying to do it again this year, we will probably have it this year.

What's Laurie's growler and gulp all about?

Oh the drink special? We have growlers. If you come in to get a growler filled, you get a pint for like a buck and a half, a buck seventy-five, a cheap pint to go with your growler. While you're getting your growler filled, you can drink a cheap pint. It encourages people to get their growler on that day, and people do. They bring two or three growlers and have two or three pints.

What makes you different from homebrewing besides scale?

Not a whole lot, other than it's a lot easier for us, like for carbonation. For homebrewers, if you're bottling, you put a little sugar in there and let it carbonate over a few weeks. We have a tank that we can force CO2 through it to cabinet it in two days. So yeah, it's a lot easier. Other than that, it is basically the same. We use more automatic equipment. Our miller, just like a homebrewer, we mill it, we mash it, steep it, all that. We have a lot higher tech.



The Brewhouse



Mug Members



I Am Root Rootbeer



BRIESS

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