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# Low Daily is a hometown hit

Brewer returns to Burlington after learning craft on West Coast

by **Jason Arndt**

STAFF WRITER

**B**urlington's Low Daily Brewery features multiple beverages, including locally produced brews, which can satisfy any beer aficionado's taste buds.

While customers can savor Low Daily's offerings, they can sit comfortably inside the historic building at 700 N. Pine Street, which consists of cushioned couches, a dartboard and even board games.

However, once people go behind the building, they are exposed to a new atmosphere – a beer garden.

Tim Sullivan, co-owner of Low Daily, said the beer garden presently seats between 70 to 80 people with plans to expand in the very near future.

"We are getting more picnic tables, so we will have seating for over 100 within a few weeks," he said. "It is a nice outdoor space where you can enjoy a beer."

The beer garden, meanwhile, is open all seven days a week, weather permitting, Sullivan said.

"As long as it is not raining and any time we are open, we will have the beer garden open," he said.

The Low Daily beer garden, however, offers much more than a place to sit while having a locally produced beer.

Typically, Low Daily schedules live music on select dates, food trucks and even has family-friendly activities.

"We are trying to have live music here every weekend, we have kind of a temporary stage right now, we would like to build a more permanent stage for bands to play," he said. "We will also keep having food trucks here on the weekends."

While Low Daily offers food trucks, Sullivan said customers are welcome to bring in their own, especially from other local establishments.

"People can always bring in food from one of the awesome restaurants downtown, or anywhere," Sullivan said.

## **Family-friendly activities**

Additionally, unlike a tavern, Low Daily will have several activities for customers to participate in during the summer.

For example, Low Daily plans on bringing in a basketball court, where customers can play a simple pickup game.

"We are going to build a little basketball court and so we are going to have pickup



Tim Sullivan, co-owner of Low Daily Brewery, relaxes in the outdoor beer garden at his downtown Burlington establishment.

JASON ARNDT PHOTO *Readers' Top Choice*

basketball games," he said. "We will have some more sports things going on, like badminton."

Low Daily's beer garden, like other similar venues, delivers a family-friendly vibe with activities for children.

At Low Daily, Sullivan often sees children running around, taking part in games, while parents have a beer.

"It is just a different atmosphere back here, we get a lot of families, so we have some things for kids to play with," he said. "There are usually kids running around, which you don't normally see at a bar."

Since opening, Low Daily has experienced a steady stream of new customers, with some coming from out of town.

"We are seeing more people come from out of town because there is a lot more things happening in downtown Burlington," he said, crediting other local establishments for the influx. "I think people from surrounding area taking notice of that and they want to come and check out what's happening, not just here, but in Burlington in general."

Wedding guests using other venues, he said, oftentimes come for a quick drink before or after the reception.

## **Master brewer**

Sullivan, a Burlington native who returned to his hometown, moved to San

Diego with his wife and co-owner Claire in 2015 so Tim could attend a University of California-San Diego brewing program.

He began working on the bottling line at Karl Strauss Brewing Company before becoming an assistant brewing.

Upon promotion, the Sullivans moved to the Pacific Northwest, where he became a brewer at Ecliptic Brewing in Portland, Oregon.

Using his experience, he developed enough confidence to open his own brewery, but wanted to return to his hometown roots in Burlington.

Since returning, he opened Low Daily at 700 N. Pine St., which originally served as an electric railway terminal almost 100 years and underwent several transitions.

"We got 12 beer lines, typically one or two hard ciders on there, we have gluten-free not made in house from a different brewery," Sullivan said of his menu. "We have some non-alcoholic options, snacks, and beyond that, a different food truck each weekend."

Low Daily is open noon until 6 p.m. Sundays, 4 to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursdays, 4 to 10 p.m. Fridays and noon to 10 p.m. Saturdays.

As for the beer garden, Sullivan plans to keep it open as long as the weather is pleasant. He kept the outdoor space running through November last year.



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# 25 years and going strong

## Area consignment boutique celebrates anniversary

By **Tracy Ouellette**

EDITOR

**N**ew to You Consignment Boutique in Rochester is celebrating its 25th anniversary this week and offering 25% off everything through Saturday.

"The years have just flown by," owner Maggie Hodgson said. "I can't believe it's been 25 years."

The shop originally opened next to the Kinder Klokset on Front Street in Rochester in April 1997 and was there about five years before moving to Main Street in 2002.

"I love Rochester, it's a great place for people to come for a visit," Hodgson said. "It's a short drive from everywhere and people can enjoy not only my place but all the other shops and restaurants around me. It's a hidden gem."

Hodgson said her store is more "boutique" than some resale shops and the quality of items she carries are higher end and plentiful.

"We have a lot here," she said. "Lately I've feel the big stores are so empty and they want you to order online more. We don't have an online store, we want you to stop in and see what's we have. We're packed full of awesome things."

With being in Rochester for a quarter of a century now, Hodgson still marvels at how many people are just finding the store.

"I get 'discovered' every single day," she said. "It's awesome. After 25 years people are still just finding us."

Hodgson added that the downtown Rochester business district is drawing in new customers at a steady pace.

"We have some great restaurants," she said. "The coffee shop is great and we have the sandwich shop and Chances, and don't forget the Fox and Fork for the wine. We have a lot of fun stuff here downtown."

Although the COVID-19 pandemic did put a crimp on things for a while, Hodgson said things have pretty much returned to normal in the store. She added that while she doesn't have an online store, for a time she was selling more on Facebook.

"But that's not happening as much now, people are happy to be back in the store and shopping," she said.

### **Selling on consignment**

Hodgson said one of the reasons she owns the resale shop is to help the environment.

"Not only is shopping second-hand a



New to You Consignment Boutique owner Maggie Hodgson sells clothing, accessories, jewelry and in her Rochester consignment shop. The boutique is at 200 W. Main St. in downtown Rochester. The store is open Tuesday through Saturday.

TRACY OUELLETTE *Readers' Top Choice*

great option for updating your wardrobe with current items at a great price, but it saves on putting more into the landfills. We all need to do our part to reduce and reuse where we can. Sometimes I think maybe people don't think of this as an option for that, but it's a way we can help save our earth."

The shop's mission statement reads: "Our mission as a business is to offer fashionable clothing at reasonable prices and to reduce our carbon footprint by recycling existing fashion through our shoppers and donating items to charities in need."

New to You accepts items for resale without an appointment, including shoes, clothes, handbags, jewelry and more.

People can bring in their items, in a tote with a cover, and leave them at the store, returning two to five days later to pick the tote back up.

The store accepts department store brands not more than three years old. New to You sets the selling price and consignors receive 40% of selling price.

Spring and summer items are accepted January through May; fall and winter items are accepted July through December.

*New To You Consignment Boutique is at 200 W. Main St., Rochester. The store is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday.*

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# New name, fresh look

## Two area couples transform former Gabby's Palace into Archives

By **Mike Ramczyk**

CORRESPONDENT

Theodore, a sweet hound, greets you with a tail wag and some friendly sniffs when you walk in.

A legion of family, friends and even the little kids have helped sand, drywall, paint, refinish, remodel and revamp the former Gabby's Palace bar and restaurant in Burlington after Dave and Sandy Corbett sold the place back in mid-April.

Out with the old, in with the new.

"It's always been my dream to own a restaurant," said Archives co-owner Gary Hanline.

Gary, a Lake Geneva native who grew up in Bloomfield Township, and Samantha Bock, a Gurnee, Illinois, native, speak of a desire to carry on the Friday Night Fish Fry tradition of the Palace, and their significant others, Lauren Hanline and Maxwell Boyle, form a four-person team of ownership for Archives, which opened in July.

After closing on April 15, Gary and Sam joked that it seems like 100 people have already stopped by, on Fridays, knocked on the door or walked inside and asked if there was a fish fry to eat.

The answer was 'no,' for now, because they're still putting the finishing touches on cleaning, refinishing wooden planks and shining up tile flooring.

But make no mistake about it – things are ready to go, Gary and Sam are excited to live out this longtime dream as fish fries, along with sandwiches for lunch, are coming soon.

Samantha is a 2008 Burlington High School graduate, and she and Max are also planning for a wedding, in between 12-hour days the past two months preparing Archives for the grand opening.

"We bought a house in Pell Lake," Sam said. "I worked at Dyer (School) for a couple years, but I've been all over the place, Colorado, Kenosha, Lake Geneva, but we're going to eventually move to Burlington."

Sam has a bunch of experience in the service industry, managing and bartending Papa's Blue Spruce the past four years in Lake Como, and she plans to run the front end of Archives.

Gary, who has lived in Burlington for five years, ran the kitchen at Next Door Pub the past 12 years.

He plans to hold it down on the 'back end' of Archives, or run the kitchen.

Gary actually met his wife, Lauren, at the Next Door Pub, and Sam worked there



Owners Gary Hanline and Samantha Bock stand outside the former Gabby's Palace in downtown Burlington. The pair and their partners opened as Archives Bar and Grill in July.

MIKE RAMCZYK Readers' Top Choice

for six or seven years, she says.

And, "I got my job there because of him," Sam added.

"I met my fiancé through someone I met at the Pub, so it's all connected," Sam joked.

Gary said he and his wife were looking into places during the COVID-19 pandemic, and decided to hold off because of all the restrictions and obstacles.

"We're both at a point where we want our own thing," Sam said. "We want to create a great place for people to come to, and just keep that going."

Both are first-time owners, and they will work full-time at Archives. Lauren is a nurse practitioner, and Max owns a car place in the Lake Geneva area, and they will help whenever possible.

"We all have service industry

experience, and my whole family has experience in service, so it's nice to know we have the help if we need it," Sam added.

### Fish fry a staple

Continuing the Friday night fish fry that made Gabby's famous in the area was an easy decision.

"I don't think we could not do fish fry," Sam joked. "We'd get run out of town."

Gary said they were closed for six weeks remodeling, and there were "at least 100 couples" that came to the door and asked about a fish fry.

And it's not your average fish fry.

It's a homemade, original family recipe, and there's gluten-free batter.

"We're definitely planning on fish fry," Sam said. "It'll be our own recipe, we have a family breading recipe."

"We're planning on gluten-free batter for everything. We know that's a big thing for people. That's a goal," Gary added.

Onion rings, jalapeno poppers and other appetizers favorites will also be gluten-free.

Moreover, Sam says they want a few vegan options. She says these kind of options are lacking in the area.

"We know a lot of people who have an issue, so we want to give them options, too," Gary added.

Archives will also emphasize a lunch menu, and other tasty mixers behind the bar.

"You ever had S.O.S. – S\*\*\* on a shingle? Corned beef, I'd like to do a variation. It's like a 'reu' (reuben) with corned beef, mixed with peas, and it goes on a piece of toasted bread."

"It was a big thing in the Navy, my grandpa used to make it for us when we were kids."

There's also a meatball sandwich, and Gary said there are 'homestyle' sandwiches mostly.

Archives will be closed Tuesdays, but other than that, it's going to be six days a week, ripe with good food, drinks and a family feel.

They're planning to keep the kitchen open until 9 p.m., and 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday nights.

*Archives Bar and Grill is in the former Gabby's Palace building, 356 N. Pine St., Burlington.*

*Find them on their Facebook page, Archives Bar and Grill, for specific details on when they will open their doors, along with photos of the transformation from Gabby's to Archives.*



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# Flavor fusion

Chinuk Sushi Grill and el Pedro Taco offer unique taste combinations

By **Sandra Landen Machaj**  
CORRESPONDENT

Earlier this year a new and exciting restaurant opened just off the square in downtown East Troy.

The Chinuk Sushi Grill and el Pedro Taco, 2919 Main St., offers a fresh take at dining in the area.

“We are an Asian fusion restaurant,” said Michael Salvatore, manager of restaurant. “We offer a variety of unique food combinations that appeal to many palates.”

While many may not think of Asian Fusion and sushi as typical Wisconsin fare, it has been very well-received by customers, according to Salvatore.

For some, this type of food has been a special treat that they were only able to enjoy when out of town where this specialty type of restaurant was available. To others, Asian Fusion food is an entirely new experience that often becomes a regular part of their dining experience.

Asian fusion is a method of cooking that combines ingredients from different culinary traditions that may originate in different regions of the same country or from different countries and cultures. They are then presented in a new way.



This method of cooking became popular in the 1960s and 1970s and continues to evolve in today’s fine restaurants.

“Everything we serve is made by hand. Our head sushi chef, Jino, who is from Korea, is known for his unique creations,” Salvatore said. “Because each piece of sushi has to be hand created, customers need to be patient. We have three additional sushi chefs who work with our head chef. Each chef puts their own special touch on their sushi rolls.”

## A modern look

The building itself is unique and gives off a relaxing vibe. A modern exterior with

large windows is accented with natural wood and white trim. The bar is casual with beautiful wood plank tables and bar, all finished in a natural wood tone. The wood itself was repurposed from a 120-year-old barn that was being torn down in the area.

The bar is full service offering traditional mixed cocktails made to order. They also carry Sake, a Japanese libation.

“There are four grades of sake, and we offer all four,” said Salvatore. “Each grade has a special way to be served. The lower grades are served warm, but the top grade is always served cold.”

While the bar is light and casual – a

**top:** A couple enjoys some sushi and a cocktail at the bar at Chinuk Sushi Grill. The restaurant offers a good place to relax and enjoy the freshly made cocktails and the individually created sushi rolls. **above:** Chinuk Sushi Grill and el Pedro Taco, 2919 Main St., East Troy, opened in February. Located just off the square, the restaurant features an Asian Fusion style of cooking.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ Readers' Top Choice



place to enjoy a beverage and an appetizer while one gathers with friends – a step into the formal dining room produces a very different vibe.

The formal dining room has white tablecloths and is perfect for that special date night dinner. It offers a more serene vibe, as one enjoys the specially made foods created by chef Jino.

A special sushi table where the chef creates the sushi rolls one piece at a time is in the dining room. There is seating around the chef's table for customers who prefer to eat there while watching him create their food.

Eating in an Asian fusion restaurant requires time and patience as everything is made to order. The sushi rolls are hand rolled by the chef, with each chef adding a special touch. Asian fusion requires savoring each unique ingredient in the food to appreciate how they work well together for the special taste.

"Quality ingredients are important when creating dishes. We use top quality fresh seafood in all our dishes. The fish is always fresh as we purchase it daily," Salvatore said. "Each day we purchase fresh salmon, tuna, and yellow tail in addition to other fresh fish that may be available. We only purchase fish that is sustainable."

Salvatore also notes that on some evenings – especially if you have a later reservation – they may run out of some specific varieties of the fish if it is particularly popular. But there are always other great choices from our menu.

## Sushi primar

For those new to the sushi menu, understanding what each special dish consists of is important. Listed on the menu is a description of some of the foods available. Maki is a seaweed rice roll with a piece of fresh fish inside along with other items such as cucumber, special sauces, or avocado.

The Maki is more what most people think of as sushi. Here there is always a Maki of the day, which varies due to chef's preference. It can be ordered individually as one roll or as a combination of two rolls as a dinner entrée.

Nigiri is pieces of fish with rice, while the sashimi is the fish served alone. A combination of Maki, Nigiri, and sashimi dishes are often shared by a group.

The Chinuk menu carries a full selection of starters both from the kitchen and from the fresh sushi bar. The restaurant offers the traditional Miso soup, made with soybean paste, tofu and green onions. There are several salads available from octopus salad or seaweed salad, for those looking for a new taste experience, to a traditional house salad of fresh greens and vegetables.

Entrees too can be the more traditional cooked Cornish hen, broiled salmon, pork cutlet or even rib eye steak with the Asian fusion twist.

For the seafood lover, a grilled shrimp, scallops and lobster entrée is served with a creamy garlic sauce and udon noodles.

## El Pedro Taco

The el Pedro Taco portion of the menu presents starters such as Panko breaded shrimp, guacamole or a variety of tacos, including al pastor (Mexican pork), Korean BBQ Pork, pescado (fish) or other varieties again keeping the Asian Fusion style of cooking by incorporating items such as the tempura or Korean BBQ pork into the traditionally Mexican taco.

According to Salvatore, while some may have questioned the choice of an Asian fusion restaurant for this area, it has been very successful. Almost 93% of the customers are local residents who are embracing the new experience in food. Reservations, especially on weekends, are full.

"Along with our relaxing décor and fine food, our staff is our greatest asset. They are a young group who work hard and work well together as a team," Salvatore said. "They are always anxious to please the customer and are willing to explain food items that may be new to their customers. We are very proud of our hard working staff."

Because of the time required to create the special foods offered



This is an array of freshly made maki rolls, which was the special of the day on a recent visit.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ Readers' Top Choice

here, reservations are required on Thursday, Friday and Saturday and highly recommended on other days. The restaurant is open from 5 to 9 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Reservations can be made online at [chinuksushi.com](http://chinuksushi.com) or by calling the restaurant after 5 p.m. at 262-749-1452.

In nice summer weather, being outdoors in the evening, with family or friends is always a comfortable way to end the day.

This summer there is a new addition – a rooftop bar. The bar offers full service and will also offer Korean Barbecue cooked on the roof on a hibachi grill.

Imagine, being up on the rooftop enjoying a beautiful summer evening with a view of the square in the distance, and sipping your favorite beverage while the aroma of Korean BBQ wafts through the air. With the fragrant aroma in the air, there will not be many patrons who don't succumb to ordering Korean BBQ to enjoy.

"We are very pleased with the success we have had since opening. Most nights our reservations are completely filled before we even open," said Salvatore, who has managed several restaurants in the Lake Geneva area. "Sometimes we can fit additional guests at the bar but we recommend making a reservation to be certain of getting in."

*Chinuk Sushi and el Pedro Taco is at 2929 Main St., East Troy, just off the square.*

*Call at 262-749-1452 after 5 p.m. for reservations or visit the website [chinuksushi.com](http://chinuksushi.com).*

# Nostalgia on the menu

Annie's offers old-fashioned, drive-in experience, complete with carhops

By **Jennifer Eisenbart**

STAFF WRITER

When people think of some of the classics from the 1950s and 1960s, it's not confined to music and movies.

Drive-in restaurants have along history in the area, especially one in Elkhorn. Since 1968, a drive-in has called 645 N. Lincoln St., Elkhorn, home – first as a Dog and Suds. Now, for as long as most can remember, the drive-in has been Annie's Burgertown.

Owned by Jeff and Maria Halpin for the last 29 years, Annie's opens in the spring and closes at the start of winter. In the months in between, the couple offers a large and varied menu with everything from traditional fast-food favorites to nostalgic touches like pizza burgers and homemade root beer.

Annie's remains unique as one of, if not the only, place in Walworth County with carhop service.

"We have always tried to do our best with food quality and service and make many of our items from scratch," Maria Halpin said. "Many customers enjoy the nostalgia of coming to a drive-in and getting served in their car, or just relaxing outside at one of our picnic tables.

"We love what we do," she added.

After starting life as a Dog and Suds, Halpin said she thinks the second owners changed the name to Burgertown. The third owner, Ann Harkness, added "Annie's" – and the Halpins purchased the business from Harkness in 1993.

Halpin said they remained committed to the large menu, which includes the expected burgers and fries, and hot dogs. But it also features Coney dogs and pizza burgers with a long list of appetizers, salads and wraps.

"We originally inherited a large menu, as there were not a lot of other fast-food options until the 90s," Halpin said. "We added a few others items over the years, such as gyros, Italian beef, salads and wraps.

"Tastes and eating habits change and we try to be conscious of that," she added.

There's also the matter of the homemade root beer, a recipe Halpin said they inherited



Emily Poeschel, one of the many carhops at Annie's, prepares to take food out to a customer.

JENNIFER EISENBART Readers' Top Choice

from the previous owners.

"It is our most popular beverage by far," she said, adding that they sell it by the gallon.

And on top of the seasonal business, Annie's now has a catering business – one born by accident as Annie's provided food for an employee who was graduating.

"Word of mouth over the years has made it an integral part of our business now," Halpin said, adding that most items are made from scratch.

Annie's caters through the holidays, so the only real downtime is in January.

## Hiring youth

Halpin said that while finding employees can be a challenge, the business is "blessed" with being able to hire students.

"We hire a lot of students who like fewer hours during the school year and more

hours in the summer," Halpin explained.

She added that the couple's children are also a huge help with the business.

"We try to keep it a fun atmosphere, especially with such a young staff," she said. "For many it is their first job. We want it to be as enjoyable while teaching them skills they can use forward in life."

For all that Annie's offers, though, Halpin did make clear one thing – a certain standard that most think of with drive-ins is gone forever.

"They never wore roller skates to my knowledge," said Halpin. "Our carhops have made it clear that we're not about to start now."

*Annie's Burgertown is open Monday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.*

*For more information, call 262-723-3250 and visit [anniesburgertown.com](http://anniesburgertown.com).*



# More than just wine

## Buzzed Wine Bar opens in downtown Burlington

By **Mike Ramczyk**

CORRESPONDENT

Melissa Smith was fed up with the corporate world.

After years of working in finance for big companies in the Chicago area, the 47-year-old Barrington, Illinois, native was looking to start fresh with her own business.

When the pandemic hit, it lit the fire Smith needed to branch out and take a chance.

Now, her dream is coming true.

In early May, she opened Buzzed Wine Bar in downtown Burlington, as luckily it just so happened that the old Rustic Barrel was moving.

Growing up in the Chicago area, Smith knew she wanted a small-town feel and loved Burlington, but there were definitely some hoops to jump through.

“Ideally, I wanted to purchase a building but couldn’t find any,” Smith said. “I stopped in to see the Rustic Barrel people in December. I got the last liquor license. I originally wanted to sell only wine, but Wisconsin doesn’t have a wine-only license unless you are basically a restaurant. The only other option was to be a retail store, or apply for a Class B reserve license (\$12,500), and it was fine to submit a bunch of stuff but it was quite a process.”

“It took a few months, and the license hadn’t been used in awhile. I had to go to a city council meeting, and they said they were sorry I had to do this. The city council members were very supportive. Now I have a Class B combo license, so not only can I serve wine, I can serve basically everything. Everything I have to drink on the menu, I also sell bottles to go.”

Smith has an eye-catching, handcrafted wooden bar along with comfortable, colorful chairs for groups of people. Behind the bar are bottles of classy wines along with liquor, and there’s shelving to the right where you can buy your favorites to take home.

On the wall are big letters with lights inside that say B-U-Z-Z-E-D.

There are high-top tables where you can look outside at the downtown, and outdoor seating.

### Why Burlington?

So why come to a small town like Burlington, so far away from home?

“My sister lives in Mount Pleasant, and the company I worked for before owned Coleman, so we would do a camping trip from Chicago at Bong Recreation, and we found Burlington,” Smith said. “The Racine



Melissa sits outside of her new wine bar, Buzzed. The bar is at 549 N. Pine St., Burlington.

MIKE RAMCZYK *Readers' Top Choice*

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

County Economic Development program was helping me with some grant and startup programs, and we were looking at Union Grove. Someone there told me I wasn't going to get the foot traffic there.

"I always remembered Burlington, so I kept coming back to here. I love the downtown. I also love the guys at John's, and Low Daily, and Bernard at Runaway does so much, and Allie and Megan at Quotes & Cotton."

Smith said it's a "cozy little wine bar" but there are also spirits.

It's not just wine, there is bourbon, tequila and whiskeys. She says people are usually pleasantly surprised.

"We have a bunch of different wines available in flights or glasses," Smith said. "We have a few signature cocktails that we try to put a wine spin on, like 'Buzzed' which is a bourbon sour with red wine, and a Summer Sangria, which is a margarita meets a sangria, with a really nice cucumber jalapeno tequila."

Smith added that it's not too fancy of a place. She wants it to be approachable and doesn't want people to feel overwhelmed.

"I get a lot of people that say they can't drink beer," she said. "I offer little tasters before people buy it. We're heavier on the whites and pinks and sparkling for the summer, but we're going to change it up seasonally and based on feedback."

Smith loves it when people find something new and try different varieties of drinks.

She says she catches folks on their way to dinner, or people that want to grab a glass of wine when they're shopping downtown.

And it's not only women.

Smith said she had a group of guys recently that stopped in and had some wine after seeing the new "Top Gun" movie.

"They were so jazzed up," Smith joked.

"They were saying they just saw Maverick and they were so excited."

## A changing scene

Smith brings Buzzed Wine Bar to downtown at a time when breweries like Low Daily and Runaway have revitalized and diversified the downtown bar scene.

"During COVID, I just decided I was tired of corporate America," Smith said. "I wanted to do something that inspired me more. I also got tired of Chicago a little. It just wasn't the fun Chicago it was a few years ago. In Wisconsin, people are so friendly, and everyone wants to help. Even before I opened, the woman who owns the wine bottle shop in Lake Geneva was so helpful."

Smith now lives in the area with her dog, Kenny Rogers, and she enjoys having her sister Jennifer come around the business to help. She says the biggest challenge is the size of the space of the bar. She would love to get a bigger space to give people more privacy, or have the option for musicians to come in and perform.

Otherwise, she says it's been going well.



In addition to wine, Buzzed Wine Bar owner Melissa Smith serves a variety of whiskeys and other alcoholic beverages.

MIKE RAMCZYK Readers' Top Choice

"I've got wines, bourbons, whiskeys and tequilas," Smith said. "I may bring some of Low Daily's beer in at some point. I've tried to keep things as local as I can. The bar was made by Danny Z, he's in Burlington. Some of the candies are from a little store in Mukwonago."

Eventually, the goal is to have a bigger space to have more people inside.

Her first event was a Rose' tasting in June.

The popular French wine was featured because it was National Rose' Day. Smith had 12 or 13 different kinds of Rose' and she's also bringing in some canned wine cocktails, which she thinks would be nice for boating season.

She said she likes her new work lifestyle.

"This is just different," Smith said. "I'm standing all day, I'm washing dishes, I'm using the register, making change, pouring wine, unpacking boxes in the basement, and I love it. I don't have to be 'on' all the time. I like meeting people and talking to people and hearing their stories. I get people of all ages, young folks, moms and people on date nights."

Smith says she also wants to start a Wine Club and a Loyalty Club eventually.

"I'll give myself a year to do this, and if I hate it, that's fine, I can do anything for a year," Smith said. "And I love it so far."

And aside from the word meaning getting a "buzz" from drinking, Buzzed Wine Bar has a much deeper, sweeter meaning.

Smith's 6-year-old niece, Atlas, loves bees, and there's actually a bee on the Buzzed Wine Bar sign on the window.

Smith has always wanted to start a business with her sister, and now she's able to honor her sister's daughter.

"Jennifer also left the corporate world once she had my niece, and she's been helping me with the website and social media," Smith said. "She still wants to do an art studio, and she was going to call it 'Little Bee' art studio, and I was going to be 'Buzzed Wine Bar' and they kind of went together."

"Atlas kind of came up with the name not realizing 'Buzzed' was also a play on buzzed."

Buzzed Wine Bar is at 549 N. Pine St. Find them at [buzzedwinebar.com](http://buzzedwinebar.com).



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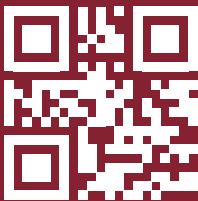
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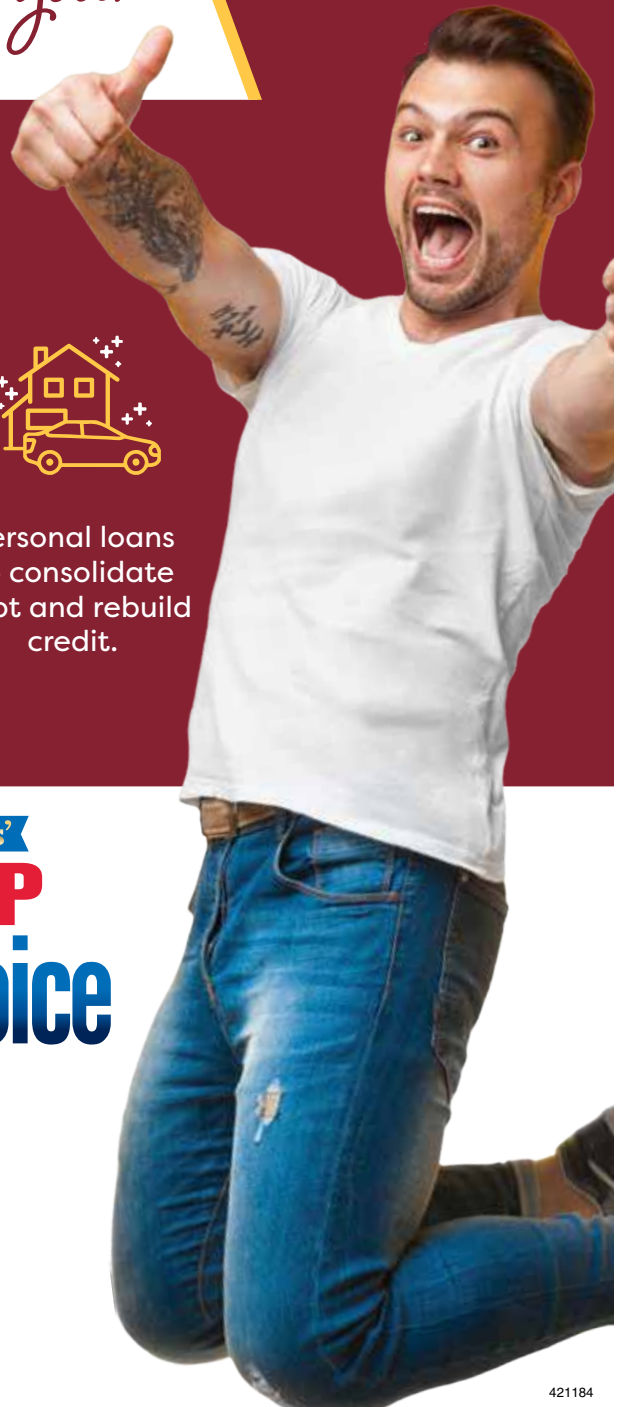


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# A taste of the country

Family farm is now a bustling craft brewery

By **Jennifer Eisenbart**

STAFF WRITER

Duesterbeck's Brewery may have only been open for two and a half years, but the farmland it is on has a long legacy in Walworth County.

The Duesterbeck Farm has been in the family for more than a century, and the brewery honors Dennis Duesterbeck – the family patriarch – his wife, Cathy, and his children.

Ben and Laura (Duesterbeck) Johnson are owners of the brewery, which is passing down the family farm and starting a new business at the same time.

"He wanted to own a tap room and I wanted to save my farm," explained Laura of her husband. "So it was able to be passed down to the next generations."

Ben, is the brewmaster at Duesterbeck's, located at N5543 County Road O, Elkhorn. The farm and brewery is located in Sugar Creek township, has an Elkhorn address and resides in the Delavan-Darien School District.

"We embrace all three," Ben said.

## How it got started

Ben Johnson has been brewing since he was 19, starting out as a home brewer over a stove.

He then switched to a turkey fryer and finally to a home microbrewery in the basement of the couple's home. During it all, Ben got his undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in bacteriology and then went to dental school at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.

He still works as a dentist, with a practice in Delavan for the last 14 years.

But through it all, he began perfecting his brews and had a dream.

"To open a taproom, to get my brew recipes out to the public," Ben said. "Laura's dream was to keep the family farm alive."

It turned out to be a match made in heaven, placing the brewery on the family farm and working to provide a different kind of farm experience than what Laura grew up with.

"We were not wanting to be the traditional type of agriculture," Laura said. "We had to think outside of the box. I wanted this farm to continue as a Duesterbeck farm, not the name of the family that took it over."

Dennis Duesterbeck was alive when the family began planning the brewery, and



**above:** Duesterbeck's Brewing Company, at N5543 County Road O in Elkhorn, has taken a family farm and reinvented it for the brewing business. The taproom has numerous seasonal brews and hard seltzers on tap. **left:** Owners Ben (left) and Laura Johnson have transformed a family farm into a brewing business.

JENNIFER EISENBART Readers' Top Choice



## What's here now

The brewery sits on the footprint of the old farm buildings, with the pig barn footprint now serving as the pavilion, the grainery is now a gift shop and the former dairy barn is the taproom.

There is a stage out back. After pumping out the manure pit, it was filled with rock and concrete, but the foundation is still there.

"Everything has been repurposed," Laura said. Ben added, "we kept all the wood, to make the tables in the taproom, the back wall of the tap room is the old exterior (of the dairy barn)."

Even the flooring in the pavilion is repurposed from another part of the farm, and the old machine shed is going to be the new brewery.

"We just repurposed everything that we could," Laura said. Even the Duesterbeck Brewery logo is using an image of the original barn.

Now, though, instead of milking cows, the taproom provides another Wisconsin

approved the changes that Ben and Laura were making. However, Dennis passed in 2017 before the brewery opened.

It wasn't until October of 2019 that the dream became reality.

"Some people grieve," Laura said. "I build a barn."

Or a brewery.

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



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## CRAFT BREWERY • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

tradition – beer. There are normally about 20 beers on tap, though Ben said there are at least 70 recipes.

“Our agriculture is brew culture,” Laura said.

Ben said the brewery tries to have something for everyone, “including people who don’t like beer,” he said. There are fruited sours – a beer that is soured in a kettle with fruit added – as well as fruit seltzers, hard seltzers with flavors like key lime, orange dreamsicle, black cherry and the like.

The menu also has traditional beers from light to dark. One of the most popular is the “Nutty Bill’s Peanut Butter Porter.” The names come from the history of the family or farm, or agriculture terms.

The best seller is “Crop Duester,” a cream ale with barley and corn flavors.

Even the labels of the beer are designed in house, with Ben and Laura’s oldest son, Makai, working on the art.

The business survived the COVID-19 pandemic, using the down time to make improvements and put together the outside seating. The couple also prides themselves with hiring good employees who understand the importance of good service.

In addition to the food and brews, there are special events every week at the brewery, including trivia nights and concerts.

“We always get high ratings on how friendly our service is,” Ben said. Duesterbeck’s also sells wholesale, looking to expand its offerings once the new brewery is finished at the end of summer or beginning of fall.

*Duesterbeck’s Brewing is open from noon to 9 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, Friday from noon to 10 p.m., Saturday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 6 p.m.*

*For more information, go to [www.dbcbrewery.com](http://www.dbcbrewery.com) or call 262-729-9771.*

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