

The vine and the malt

Wineries, breweries sprout up around county

By Katherine Michalets

Special to The Freeman

TOWN OF OCONOMOWOC – Buying from local breweries and wineries is not a new trend, contends Sweet Mullets Brewing owner Mark Duchow, who opened his business in March 2012 in the Town of Oconomowoc.

Back in the 1800s, there were thousands of breweries in Wisconsin, so a town having its own is not a new concept, he said.

And as people increasingly focus on buying local, wineries and breweries have begun to dot Waukesha County.

Sweet Mullets Brewing, N58-W39800 Industrial Road, Town of Oconomowoc.

<http://sweetmulletsbrewing.com>

Duchow is a bit of a history buff when it comes to beer. He explained that local breweries began to diminish in number as refrigeration and mass transit grew in popularity.

Then the brewing industry was hit by Prohibition, followed by the Depression.

Then during World War II, beer was sent to American troops and the Allies. Postwar America saw people wanting to seem worldly,

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Joe Gutmann pours wine at Two Brothers Wines in Pewaukee.

Charles Auer/Freeman Staff

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so they bought beer from Milwaukee or St. Louis.

As things have begun to swing back to specially crafted food and beverages, Duchow felt it was a good time to open up his own brewery in the Town of Oconomowoc, where he is from.

“The area was definitely ripe for it; there was nothing around,” he said. “People are looking for the local ideal.”

They want local and fresh products and to leave a smaller carbon footprint, he said.

At Sweet Mullets, tap beer is rotated with about 30 to 40 new beers introduced each year.

“My main idea is to educate the palate. The history of beer – beer itself and fermented products are part of human history,” Duchow said.

Customers have supported the brewery, which has been in the black since it opened, he said. In 2013, Sweet Mullets had a 40 percent growth in sales and this year Duchow is anticipating record-breaking sales. He is also looking into growing his distribution.

Biloba Brewing Company,

18720 Pleasant St., Brookfield,

www.bilobabrewing.com

Opening April 4, Biloba Brewing Company has had a constant flow of people through its doors, said Gordon Lane, who owns the business with wife Jean.

The reason they chose Brookfield for their brewery is because they are from Elm Grove, Lane said. Also, previously people had to drive to either Delafield or the Third Ward in Milwaukee to get microbrews.

“It would be nice if there was something locally,” he said. “We are trying to be a community-type brewery.”

Lane said there is a need for a microbrewery in Brookfield and he believes the trend of buying locally made beer will continue.

The business also remains committed to the surrounding community, giving its spent grain to a farmer in Waukesha to use.

The Fixture,

716 Clinton St., Waukesha. *<http://fixturebrewing.com>*

The Fixture in downtown Waukesha has about four to six beers on tap at a time and they come with a fun, local name, such as Fox River Red and the ‘Sha-Shank stout. Stephen Fix opened the brewery in January 2013, but his beers weren’t available on tap until Labor Day weekend.

Owning the building made it a logical choice for Fix and his father to open up a brewery in Waukesha at a time they felt the city was doing really well.

Fix said the community has been receptive.

“A lot of people said ‘We were wondering when Waukesha would get its own brewery,’” he said.

Beers are kept on rotation at The Fixture, with favorites maintaining a permanent presence.

Fix loves that American breweries can put their own spin on beers, with many getting away from traditional brews.

While the shop local movement has helped The Fixture a bit, Fix said he wants to get the word out to more people that they are open in downtown Waukesha.

Pieper Porch Winery & Vineyard,

S67-W28435 River Road, Town of Mukwonago.

<http://pieperporchwines.com>

While on their vacations, Todd and Kathy Pieper enjoy visiting wineries and sampling wines. By doing so, they developed a passion for the beverage that Ernest Hemingway called “one of the most civilized things in the world.”

The couple pursued opening a winery in Wisconsin and found land on River Road, where they could construct a building with a second-floor residence and a first-floor winery that would be open for visitors. The business opened in May 2012.

Pieper Porch’s clientele primarily comes from Waukesha and Milwaukee counties, but they get visitors from other states, too.

“People thank us all of the time for opening up,” Kathy Pieper said. “People are proud to say this is in their backyard.”

She has found customers want to support locally made items, she said.

Two Brothers Wines,

125 Oakton Ave., Pewaukee.

<http://twobrotherswines.com>

Customers at Two Brothers Wines enjoy hearing how wine is made and its history, said Pete Laundre, who owns the business with Henry Gutmann and Patricia Gutmann.

“They appreciate that process that we go through,” Laundre said.

The winery opened in 2009 near the Pewaukee River in downtown Pewaukee.

“We have seen that we do have support from the local community, but we also know that, given the economy, things are slowly coming around,” Laundre said.

Two Brothers Wines makes at least two dozen varieties of wine in bottles with new ones coming out this fall.