

DRINK LOCAL - nightlife - Alaska's breweries, wineries and distilleries turn out prize-winning products

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Author: *Last Call With Jessica Bowman ; Freelance*

Have you ever compared a freshly picked farmer's market tomato to a store-bought one? There's a difference and it's the same for beer. Have you tried a factory-produced, shipped-up Corona or Coors next to a pint of local IPA?

Every summer I'm inspired to shop at farmers markets and buy local produce and dairy. It's tough -- especially when winter rolls its shaggy white coat into town. But I found a way to support the local economy while assuaging my guilt and enjoying my favorite pastime. Yes, you can eat local, but it's even easier to drink local. And I'm not talking about Kaladi Bros.

Many of my favorite haunts have been drinking local for awhile now. "Almost all of our tap beers rotate through local breweries now," said Marty Kimball, special events coordinator for Kinley's Restaurant. Though Kinley's doesn't serve liquor or local wines, local beer is a must.

"A lot of the reason for using local breweries has to do with availability, diversity and product quality," Kimball said. "Anchorage is the biggest small town ever. Locals know their brew and breweries."

Another plus, Kimball added, is the competitive nature of local versus national brewers.

"There is so much competition in the local craft beer market that customer service and price are kept in check," he said. "If someone can't deliver what they promise, there are options from Homer to Fairbanks waiting to pick up a new tap handle in town."

The Midnight Sun Brewing Co. is one of the bigger players in the local drinking game. In addition to serving its own beer, the brewery also supplies other venues in town.

"We feel local establishments can create a more unique dining experience by offering local beer, wine, mead, spirits," said Barb Miller, vice president of sales, marketing and business. "Seems like the latest wave of new bars and restaurants is very supporting of incorporating local flavor into their menus."

Miller says when the brewery opened, beers that contained 30 to 35 International Bittering Units (a measure of hop bitterness) were dismissed by customers for being too bitter. Miller said its testament to Alaska's changing palate that the brewery's current best seller is Sockeye Red IPA, which boasts 70 IBUs.

Relatively new to the south side, Firetap Alehouse and Restaurant has 32 of its 36 taps serving local ale.

"Our concept right from the beginning was to feature made-in-Alaska beers," said Diane Thompson, manager/owner. The Glacier BrewHouse makes a signature brew for the Firetap, "Red Hot Mama." The venue also carries wines from Bear Creek Winery and spirits from Alaska Distillery.

The Glacier BrewHouse is one of the biggest proponents -- and providers -- of local brew in the state. The brewery sells kegs and growlers of its flagship and seasonal beer, and you can even get root beer or cream soda. BrewHouse beer is in more than 140 restaurants, bars and liquor stores from Anchorage to Nome. It's good beer too. The Big Woody Barleywine recently won a gold medal at San Francisco's 2010 Toronto Barleywine Festival for the second year in a row.

Spenard Roadhouse Bar manager Darcy Kniefel is passionate about her support for living local.

"By supporting local, we support Alaska. This is the place we have all chosen to live," Kniefel said. "We want to see it continue to flourish."

It doesn't hurt that there are some great beers made in state.

"The Alaska beer scene is doing some amazing things and the new spirits coming out are proving that Alaska has the right stuff," Kniefel said.

The Roadhouse has eight taps with a variety of local brews from Midnight Sun, Moose's Tooth, Sleeping Lady, Silver Gulch and more. Kenai Brewing made a signature beer for the restaurant, "Spenard Roadweiser." It's an all-too-drinkable crisp pilsner. The bar also carries vodka and gin from the Alaska distillery and Darcy and her team concoct their own infused vodkas (try a cucumber martini).

Alaska Distillery, known for Permafrost vodka and its infamous Smoked Salmon Flavored Vodka, is quickly gaining fans in town.

"I encourage anyone to try a blind taste test of Permafrost vodka next to any other potato vodka they like, and be blown away by the silky-smooth mouth-flavor and clean flavor," said Amy Mack, Bear Tooth Grill bar manager.

Mack also likes Alaska Distillery gin's ratio of botanicals, which she described as well-balanced and surprisingly smooth.

At Tap Root Cafe, local is the word of the day every day. "We are a place where the locals come to eat, drink and have a good time," owner Rebecca Mohlman said. "The more that we are able to support that as a business, the more money stays in the immediate economy (and) encourages a stronger sense of community."

Tap Root's biggest seller is also Midnight Sun's Sockeye Red IPA (seriously, try it).

"When we say we are out of Sockeye, people have that deer-in-a-headlight look in their eyes," Mohlman said.

Overall drinking local is good for the city, and what's good for the city is good for the citizens.

"Local beverages support local business, local business supports local people," said Lucy Kadarau, marketing manager at the Snow Goose Restaurant and Sleeping Lady Brewing Co.

It's one thing to support the local economy and quite another to enjoy what you support.

"Breweries and meaderies in Alaska are multi-award-winning on a national and international level," Mohlman said. "It's top of the line. So why wouldn't you drink local?"

Cheers to that.

Caption: Photo 1: JessicaBowmanColBug_110510.jpg Photo 2: play_cvrDrinkLocal20_110510.jpg Photo 3: SmokedSalmonVodka02_110510.jpg
BILL ROTH / Anchorage Daily News Alaska Distillery's Smoked Salmon Flavored Vodka

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In New York, a Microdistillery Brings Cheer to the Local Economy

by Bruce Watson Feb 18th 2011 6:45PM

Updated Feb 18th 2011 7:25PM

Ralph Erenzo didn't want to make booze. But he didn't have much choice.



Tuthilltown Spirits

As Tuthilltown Spirits' spokesperson

Robin Hayes tells it, the distillery's story began in 2001, when Erenzo bought 36 acres of land in Gardiner, N.Y. Located near the Hudson River and Minnewaska State Park, the small farm was well situated for hikers and mountain climbers, and Erenzo planned to open a bed and breakfast. Unfortunately, his neighbors weren't eager to see their tiny town overrun by outdoorsmen and took him to court. Two years later, his bank account had dwindled, and he was down to the last eight acres, having sold the rest to pay his lawyers.

Desperate to turn a profit on the rapidly shrinking

farm, Erenzo asked the town's enforcement officer what he could legally do with the property. New York state law allows farms to operate small wineries, so the officer suggested that Erenzo try his hand at winemaking.

Ultimately, though, Erenzo did him one better: A 2002 New York State law, based on the winemaking license, allowed farms to operate small distilleries with a maximum yearly output of 35,000 proof-gallons of liquor. Partnering with former engineer Brian Lee, Erenzo became one of the first New Yorkers to take advantage of the new law, and Tuthilltown Spirits was born.

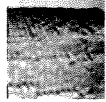
Being Neighborly

One requirement of the farm distiller's license is that 50% of the distillery's raw materials have to be grown in New York state. Given Erenzo's disputes with the neighbors, one might think that Tuthilltown wouldn't be eager to work with local farmers, but the opposite was true. In the seven years that it has been in business, the company has formed a very close relationship with nearby growers, and Tuthilltown Production Manager Joel Elder estimates that 85% of the company's raw materials -- including corn, potatoes, wheat, rye and apples -- come from farms located within three miles of the distillery.

The only major item that Tuthilltown doesn't locally source is malted barley, a problem that Elder laments: "It's nearly impossible to find a good malted barley source in the U.S., and shipping from American farms is expensive." In fact, Elder notes that the cheapest, most local supplier is in Canada: "It's closer than American producers, costs less to ship and has a comparable price."

The barley problem has thrown a serious wrench in Tuthilltown's plans to locally source all of its

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ingredients, but Elder has a solution: "We want to start growing our own barley or encourage a nearby farmer to start growing it." Not only will this help maintain the company's "locavore" ideal

but it'll also help the surrounding economy, an issue that's very important to Tuthilltown.

Elder emphasizes that "Our heart is with local agriculture. Any development at our company is tied to local agriculture and the local economy."

Building a Distillery, Expanding an Economy

Elder insists that "involvement with local growers isn't a marketing strategy. It's a survival strategy." In addition to cutting shipping costs and increasing freshness, it has given the distillery an amazing level of control over its ingredients. For example, when Tuthilltown wanted to experiment with open-pollinated heirloom grain, it contracted a local farmer, agreeing to absorb the costs of the attempt. "By subsidizing the experiment," Elder notes, "we gave them enough confidence to try a project that might not pan out."

These types of relationships have had a long-term effect on both the distillery and its neighbors. While Tuthilltown makes liquor from local apples, Elder notes that the McIntosh, Gala and Empire apples that nearby farmers grow aren't ideal for its uses. When a local orchard expressed an interest in developing an organic, self-picking operation,

Tuthilltown convinced it to start growing heirloom apple species that were more suitable for its spirits.

Elder notes that the move "Helped the farmers and helped us. We got the apples we wanted, and they were able to develop a lucrative operation."

A Deep-Pocketed Partner From Scotland

Tuthilltown has also brought outside capital into the region. Recognizing that it needed to improve its cash flow if it hoped to grow, it agreed to partner with William Grant and Sons, the Scotland-based premium liquor company that owns Hendrick's gin, Glenfiddich Scotch and Stolichnaya vodka.

Impressed with Grant's lineup and struck by its commitment to quality, Tuthilltown sold its popular "Hudson whiskey" line to the larger company. Under the terms of the agreement, Grant owns the brands, but Tuthilltown will continue to produce them.

While the Grant deal helped Tuthilltown to slightly upgrade its facilities, Elder points out that its biggest impact has been the massive increase in cash flow. "Previously, we were able to work when we could afford to procure ingredients," he notes. "Now we can distill constantly."

On a larger scale, the relationship between Grant and Tuthilltown has also poured money into the local economy. It has funded Tuthilltown's experiments with local farmers, and the distillery's increased production has been a boon for the area's growers, whose grains feed the company's cookers and stills.

Stop By and Visit

Now a significant economic force in the area, Tuthilltown has also built a stronger relationship with its neighbors. Perhaps the greatest sign of this increased friendliness lies in the distillery's growing

popularity as a tourist site. In 2009, following years of lobbying, the New York state legislature passed a law allowing microdistilleries to host tasting rooms and offer tours. To celebrate, Tuthilltown invited the public to the distillery, where fans had the opportunity to harvest rye and see where the grain is transformed into liquor.

In the year-and-a-half since the tasting room law passed, Tuthilltown has drawn whiskey aficionados from around the world. But what effect has this stream of tourists had on the sleepy town that once fought against Ralph Erenzo's small bed and breakfast? "So far," spokesperson Hayes laughs, "There has been no word from the neighbors."

See the full Special Report:

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Local distilleries toast new law allowing charging for spirit tastings

By [Beatrice Katcher](#) Posted December 11, 2013 12:00 pm

This holiday season, local high-end spirit makers are rejoicing over the end of a Prohibition-era law. Starting in January, California distilleries will be able to charge for tastings like wineries and breweries currently can.

Signed into law last September, AB933 “allows distillers to provide samples and tastings to promote the business and increase the business,” according to Assemblymember Rob Bonta of Oakland. In practice, that means spirit makers are now allowed to charge customers for a tasting, though they are still not allowed to sell bottles of their product on site. The bill also limits tastes to six per person, and requires them to be “straight” – not in cocktails or mixed drinks.

The goal of the new law, according to Bonta and Assemblymember Nancy Skinner, who co-sponsored the bill, is to support craft spirit makers who use locally sourced ingredients. “A lot of distillers offer tastings now, they just can’t charge for them,” Skinner said.

“Berkeley and Oakland are sort of ground zero for California’s food movement and locavore movement, [but] our distillers were not being celebrated the same way.”

As an example of locavore liquor-makers, Skinner cited Lance Winters, a former U.S. Navy nuclear engineer who is also a master distiller at St. George Spirits, an artisan distillery housed inside a formal naval hangar in Alameda.

“He’s making a rum from California sugarcane, he’s making a rye from rye grown in California,” Skinner said. “He’s making an eau de vie from pears that are only sourced here. This is very much like California’s wineries, so I wanted people to have more access to these local products.”

According to the American Distilling Institute, there were 69 licensed craft distillers when the organization was founded in 2003 compared to 20,000 in 1830. The California Artisanal Distillers Guild, a group of around 30 local distilleries, was a catalyst for the legislation.

Regarding possible health and public safety concerns, Bonta and Skinner say the responsibility is on the purchaser. “You can go to a grocery store and buy liquor. You can go to a restaurant, you can go to a bar and we assume that you’ll act responsibly,” Skinner said. “We have other laws in place if you don’t act responsibly, for example around drunk driving.”

Portland's growing distillery industry provides economic boost

Joshua Badcock's vodka company is the newest addition to Portland's burgeoning craft distillery industry.



Wendy Culverwell

Staff reporter- *Portland Business Journal*

Joshua Badcock became a vodka distiller the old-fashioned way.

When he met his fiancée's Russian-born father for the first time, he decided it would be politic to order the same drink, horseradish-flavored vodka.

To his surprise, Badcock liked it. The results of that fateful meeting is a Badcock-branded line of vodkas flavored with horseradish and cucumber.

Badcock Vodkas, distilled by Bend Distilling, landed in Oregon liquor stores and restaurants six months ago. Badcock is now working on opening a tasting room.

With about \$3,000 in monthly revenue, Empty Bottle is a tiny addition to Oregon's young craft distillery industry. There currently are 43 active distilleries in Oregon, a number that fluctuates but which state officials confirm is on the rise.

Local distilleries generated \$53.3 million in sales in Oregon in 2011, according to the Oregon Liquor Control Commission. The homegrown brands accounted for almost 12 percent of alcohol sales in state-controlled liquor stores.

Like wine and beer before it, locally distilled alcohol is fast gaining an audience in Oregon, which has one of the nation's highest concentrations of distilleries, according to a national trade council.

"It's really the distillers' time," said Christie Scott, spokeswoman for the state liquor control agency.

The OLCC is chartered by the state constitution to promote Oregon businesses. At the OLCC warehouse, workers repackage Oregon-produced products, which means stores can order one or two bottles to test the market.

“It gets their stuff on the shelf,” Scott said.

Driving demand rests on distilleries, and the result is a booming distilling and tourism industry in Portland’s Central Eastside Industrial District, where a loose band of distilleries have formed “Distillery Row” to woo attention from residents and tourists.

The earliest purveyors, such as House Spirits Distilling, chose the area for its cheap rent. Later arrivals seek it out for the traffic the Distillery Row designation brings to tasting rooms.

Distillery Row is the brainchild of five original distilleries that realized they could win more attention if they worked in concert.

They formed Distillery Row Tours as a nonprofit mutual benefit association and organized events to showcase their products. They coordinated tasting room hours and promoted Distillery Row as a destination where visitors could walk from one business to another.

The presence is small but the impact is not.

“Distillery Row is very popular,” said Megan Conway, spokeswoman for Travel Portland, the city’s tourism agency, which has embraced the distilleries alongside its breweries and wineries.

However, “Distillery Row” has been more of a success than the actual distilleries.

Of the original five, three are out of business, with newcomers taking their places.

Michael Heavener led one of the now-closed businesses, Highball Distilling.

When Highball closed, he signed on as president of Distillery Row Tours & Passport LLC, which promotes the area and publishes a passport showcasing member distilleries and neighboring businesses.

The first passport launched in 2011 and was an immediate success, selling out all 3,500 copies.

The second version is due in June. It will highlight five distilleries, including Vinn Distillery Inc.

Wilsonville-based Vinn is slated to open a tasting room in Portland this summer.

“It just kind of made sense to come together and promote each other and the neighborhood,” Heavener said.

House Spirits Distillery was among the first distilleries to call on the Central Eastside, relocating to Portland from Eugene in 2006. Founder Christian Krogstad moved in search of a wider audience. He found its quarters on Southeast Seventh Avenue on Craigslist.

“Rents were really affordable in this part of town,” Krogstad said.

The move paid off. House Spirits employs 15 people and will produce more than 9,000 cases of its flagship product, Aviation Gin, this year. It sells for about \$200, representing nearly \$2 million in potential revenue.

The Central Eastside Industrial Council welcomed the distillers with open arms

The council adamantly wants the area across the Willamette River from downtown Portland to retain its historic, industrial character. The new crop of alcohol-fueled businesses gives new life to old buildings.

“These guys are manufacturing and bringing in jobs. They need supplies. One business supports more businesses,” said council director Terry Taylor.

Distilleries and tasting rooms are a natural fit for the quirky warehouses and industrial buildings in the neighborhood.

“The natural characteristics of these buildings are in tune with the creative side of the microbrewing industry. They kind of work together,” said Tyler Sheils, an industrial broker with Jones Lang LaSalle who concentrates on the Central Eastside.

Fast Facts

The Oregon Distillers Guild was the first such organization in the country:
www.oregondistillersguild.org.

Oregon is home to 46 distilleries, which produce more than 336 different products.

Oregon distillers generated \$53 million in annual sales in the state—almost 12 percent of Oregon’s total liquor sales

in 2011.

Wendy Culverwell covers real estate, retail and hospitality.

New Laws Aim to Level the Playing Field for Texas Distillers

- by David Maly
- Sept. 9, 2013



Enlarge photo by: Afshin Darian

Gov. Rick Perry on Monday declared September “Texas Craft Spirits Month” as the state begins to implement new laws that give distillers more freedom to produce and sell in the state.

“I think that the main benefit of this is making sure that we have got a solid framework for our distilled craft industry to grow,” state Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, D-San Antonio, who co-sponsored four new laws that affect Texas distillers, said during a Monday press conference.

Van de Putte said the new laws put Texas in line with other states that have more relaxed distilled spirits laws, paving the way for Texas to quickly gain national traction in the industry. Distilled spirits include alcoholic beverages such as vodka, gin, tequila and rum. In Texas, distilling is a growing industry with companies like Treaty Oak producing rum and Deep Eddy Vodka making the drink named for one of Austin’s famous swimming holes.

“For the longest time, Kentucky and Tennessee have been the states that have had bragging rights on distilled spirits,” Van de Putte said.

Much of the new legislation seeks to put Texas distillers on a level playing field with other states, giving them more options to produce and sell. Under one bill co-sponsored by Van de Putte and state Rep. Ryan Guillen, D-Rio Grande City, Texas distillers can now buy beer and other liquor used in the making of spirits from other Texas distillers. Another bill by Van de Putte and Guillen allows distillers to solicit and take orders from wholesalers — something only out-of-state distilleries could do previously — and lets companies conduct product samplings at their distilleries with a specific permit to do so.

Daniel Barnes, president and cofounder of the Texas Distilled Spirits Association, said the new legislation would help the industry grow because consumers can now sample the products at the distilleries where they are made and talk to the experts who make them.

“They’ll be able to not only appreciate the craft spirit, but get to know us and get to know how to use craft spirits,” Barnes said.

Senate Bill 642, co-sponsored by Van de Putte and state Rep. John Kuempel, R-Seguin, allows companies that are licensed to package and sell food to buy distilled spirits directly from the manufacturer, saving them the cost of retailer markup.

Barnes said that the new laws would make production easier for distillers, but consumers won’t likely see a change in price.

“I think that we already have a pretty competitive craft market, and a lot of the prices have already been somewhat set,” Barnes said.

He said consumers would see the most noticeable change from Senate Bill 905, which will allow Texans to buy products directly from distillers.

Under the new law, Texas distillers can sell their products directly to consumers, with some restrictions on quantity. Previously, distillers could only sell through a three-tier system in which they sold to distributors, which sold to retailers, which sold to consumers.

Barnes said the distilled spirits industry is an emerging market, gaining most of its traction over the past few years, and he hopes the new laws will boost Texas to a national level.

“I think that you are going to start seeing a national awareness of Texas as a hotbed for distilled spirits,” Barnes said.

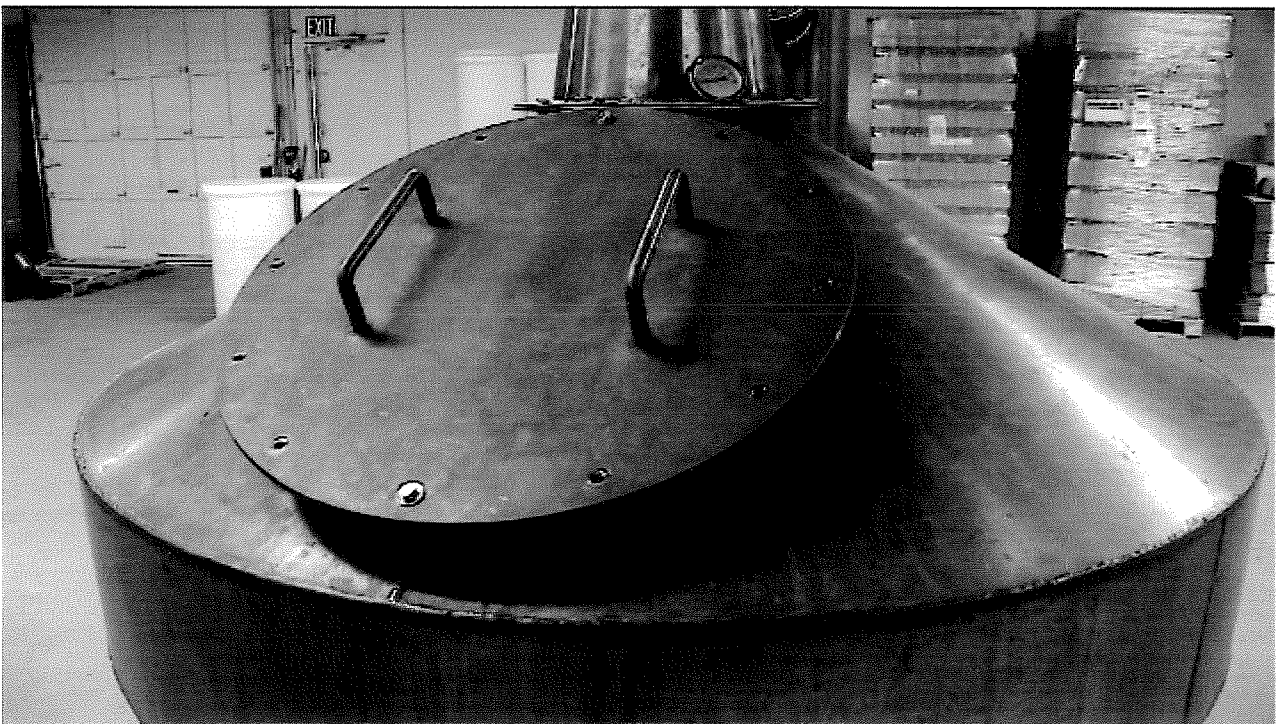
New brewers and distillers helping stir South Bend economy

Customers might soon notice new locally produced drinks on store shelves



Ted Land

POSTED: 10:44 PM EDT Sep 26, 2013 UPDATED: 11:34 PM EDT Sep 26, 2013



SOUTH BEND -

A lot gets said about South Bend being the next hub for high tech companies, scientific research labs, and state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities.

That may be the future -- but right now there are a lot of customers thirsty for something different, and some enterprising small business owners are trying to pour something new into the local economy.

“Our mantra from the very beginning is if you keep the dollars close to home, the rising tide raises all boats,”

said Charles Florance, owner of the Indiana Whiskey Company.

The corn they use is grown in Rochester, the barley comes from St. Joseph County, and their equipment was custom welded in South Bend.

“Knowing that we have essentially ten generations of sheet metal workers here in South Bend, it just made sense to use the assets we have,” said Florance.

Indiana Whiskey Company is part of a new shot of excitement in the local beverage industry, which in small ways, is helping stir the economy as a whole.

“Within a year we've gone from idea to actually producing whiskey and there are a lot of other businesses here that are going to be doing the same,” said Braden Weldy, operations manager.

Just down Sample Street, Crooked Ewe brewery is renovating an old VFW hall, with plans to turn it into a riverside restaurant and brewpub.

“The industry is definitely growing and craft beer, craft whiskey, craft wine, that’s growing tremendously over the past few years,” said Sean Meehan, co-owner.

They still have a ways to go, but hope to someday employ between thirty and fifty people.

There are, however, limits to how much this community can support.

South Bend's Drewerys Brewing Company was once the tenth largest beer producer in the country. Big name brands took over and the lager disappeared in the 70's. Now it's back, under new owners, but they're brewing it in Milwaukee.

“There’s no facility in South Bend that can handle the scope of what Drewerys needs,” said Dan Blacharski, Drewerys spokesman.

They're hoping that in a few years they can bring the brand home.

“What Drewerys would like to do is find an old building in or near the downtown South Bend area that might need some renovation, that we could fix up and use as a brewing facility,” said Blacharski.

Back at Indiana Whiskey Company, a batch of corn mash is about to start fermenting. It should be ready for sipping in about a week.

“We all believe that there’s something here in South Bend that’s worth sticking around for. That’s where this idea comes from. We're not willing to bulldoze and start new, we believe there’s a lot of value in what’s already been built, and we can harness that and do a lot of great things,” said Weldy.

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