

Fairport Brewing planted at center of village

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In an old Pure Oil gas station on a prominent Fairport corner, men and women perch on stools, snow boots tucked underneath. They tend their pints on a bar made of hard rock maple from Pulaski. Half a mile away, in an old BB gun factory, yeast devours sugars, producing a new round of beer.

Fairport Brewing Company, 99 S. Main St., is another of the area's success stories in the world of beer.

"I consider us a classic brewery, so we don't go out on a limb to find some weird ingredient that no one's ever used," says brewmaster Paul Guarracini. "We want to make the classic beers that people like to drink — drinkable beers that taste good and are authentic."

The operation started in 2010. For nine months, founder Tim Garman and Guarracini brewed on a system that could fit in a spare room and was capable of producing 15 gallons of beer. After a successful \$26,445 Kickstarter campaign last spring, they had enough money to buy better equipment and open a taproom.

"We didn't go out and buy a ton of equipment. We bought what we could afford and what we could control," Garman says. "When you start a brewery with community in mind, ... you have to really take it slow, build a strong foundation, have core values and act like a company that is here for the community."

Guarracini started brewing 20 years ago, after he served on a jury and was sequestered with a homebrewer. He left the trial with a newfound interest.

"After a few batches of brewing in the kitchen, my wife banished me to the basement," he says. This pastime developed into a passion, which led Guarracini to a homebrewing group, where he met Garman.

Their ideals matched.

"My beer philosophy is that you need to be authentic with regard to your beers," says Guarracini. "If you're going to make an English nut brown (ale), it better be an English nut brown — that means you're going to use English malt and English yeast."

Fairport Brewing became a licensed farm brewery in October, in the process making a pledge to use even more local ingredients in the beer.

"Farm brewing is more than a philosophy," Garman says. "It's actually a way of life for brewers. ... It's exciting for us to be supporting a farm in Kendall, New York, and naming our beer after the Whipple brothers who own the farm. To me, that's a big deal."

Under the terms of the farm brewing license, operations can have a taproom with no additional permits to serve beer — without having to adhere to food menu requirements — as long as 20 percent of their ingredients are grown in New York.

On Aug. 2, the business will host the inaugural Fairport Farm Brew Fest, inviting farm breweries from around the state to compete.

"When you involve your community, you have an obligation to the community, and a responsibility for great beer," says Garman. "We're products of Fairport, and we want to make sure we're making Fairport proud of us."

Wayner is a Rochester-area freelance writer.

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