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# *Sip* the Hills 2019

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spirits &  
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of the Black Hills

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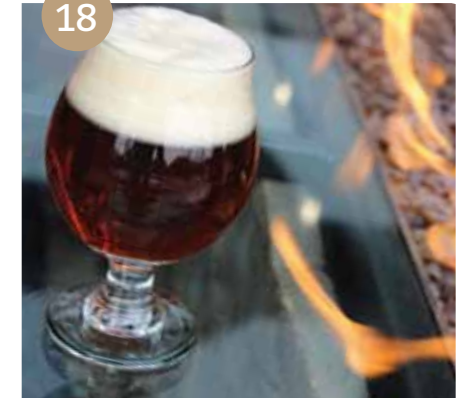
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**OF THE BLACK HILLS**

*Sip the Hills* is the essential guide to all that is food and drink in the Black Hills. Both locals and tourists alike can use this publication as a tool to enjoy exceptional wine and beer, to indulge with a quality cocktail, and to appreciate amazing culinary experiences. Please frequent the businesses featured and advertised in this magazine; they are on the cutting edge of an exciting industry. Explore all the Black Hills has to offer, both indoors and outdoors. Keep sipping the Hills.

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*Sip* the Hills

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# from the editor

Kara Sweet



## Vision. Passion. Hard work.

These are the elements that built the beer, wine, and food industries in the Black Hills over twenty years ago.

This passion attracts guests, but it also attracts those with similar interests.

Myself included.

I realized a decade ago that wine, beer, and food were my passions, and specifically the wine, beer, and food of the Black Hills—the beautiful place where I was born and raised.

The contagious pull of the trailblazers in the region had me. I worked for years on the fringe of the industry—visiting wineries, breweries, and eateries that were run and staffed by dynamic individuals who loved these places, perhaps even more than I.

It wasn't long until I was working part-time jobs at some of my favorite spots during the busy summer season. I was able to

meet many of the pioneers of the area. I got to see the other side of my interests, and I still



was more than intrigued.

I started this magazine, *Sip the Hills*, as basically a love letter to my favorite businesses in my favorite place. It was a way to personally get to know the people behind these innovative ideas, but it was also a way to promote what I saw as important aspects of life. The good life is enjoyed during a gourmet meal. Meaningful conversations and

discussions over a mug of beer or a glass of wine bring people together. But mostly, people find joy. They are happy.

I wanted to be part of what created this happiness.

Finally, I took the full-time plunge into my part-time hobby. Two years ago, I changed careers to be able to promote the craft food and beverage industry of the Black Hills. I now spend my days surrounded by the people who not only started this industry, but also by those who continue to innovate and make this a thriving industry in which to work and play.

I still love every second of my avocation turned vocation. I feel lucky to be a part of it. And I feel even luckier to promote those who are in it with me. Those with vision, passion, and drive are still paving the way. Their innovations fill me with enthusiasm and make me excited to see what's next in the Black Hills.



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*"My family bootlegged their way out of the Ukraine in Russia, all the way across Europe to the United States and from New York to Hazen, ND, where they became farmers again, and they quit bootlegging."*

— Jerry Sailer



Jerry Sailer (left) and Randy Decker (right) man the bar they designed at Black Hills Contraband.

## A BAR OF THEIR OWN

Jerry Sailer and Randy Decker have been friends for a long time. It all started over 20 years ago when they both worked as DJs and security at the former Rapid City, SD, establishment Shotgun Willies.

Today the friends are again behind a bar—their own—pouring distilled spirits produced by Jerry at

Black Hills Contraband.

Black Hills Contraband is a distillery based on Jerry's family history. He is the seventh generation distiller, although he is the first to get a license to do so legally. "My family bootlegged their way out of the Ukraine in Russia, all the way across Europe to the United States and from New York to Hazen, ND, where they became farmers again,

and they quit bootlegging."

In Jerry's family, when a boy turned 15, his grandfather and father would teach him the family recipe and how to build a still. Jerry remembered, "Even at 15, I always thought my dream was ... to see it [the liquor] for sale, see it on a liquor store shelf someday. That was my dream. It took 40 years, but I got there."

What Jerry's family made

was basically 160 proof moonshine, very raw and coarse. "It was like paint remover with lighter fluid for flavor." But Jerry's Great Aunt Mary, the only woman in the family to know how to distill, visited Jerry when she was 98 years old. An English teacher by day, she told stories of having bootlegged with Al Capone during prohibition. She also told her secret: how

to take the burn and the bite out of the liquor and make it a smooth, enjoyable product.

It took Jerry nearly 20 years to perfect this special, and secret, formula. He tested his experiments on Randy. As Jerry's best friend, Randy was always nice enough to try the samples, but would usually pour out most of them. "But when I hit The Original, our amaretto—it is called The Original because it was the first one I got right—I took all the burn off. It was an enjoyable product." That's when Randy knew they had to market it, so they formed Black Hills Contraband at its first location in Box Elder.

Accomplishing Randy's goal of a full-fledged business was nearly as difficult as perfecting the distilling process. There are currently only seven distilling licenses in the state. Contraband is the only active distiller in the Black Hills, with the next closest distiller in the Badlands. The permitting applications through the federal, state, and local levels could be one reason there are so few; it's a grueling process that took Jerry and Randy almost two years. The federal government agency, the TTB (Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau) is very diligent, requiring all of the equipment for distilling to be in place before giving approval for production to begin. Then permits from the state are needed. Finally, city governments have certain requirements as well. At one point over a year into the process, Jerry and Randy even considered throwing in the towel, but they knew they couldn't. They had come too far.

Black Hills Contraband first opened in Box Elder because it was the only town that really welcomed them. The distillery quickly outgrew that space, and Jerry and Randy

looked for a larger production and bar area. By then, Rapid City said it needed such a business, and even worked with them to change existing laws and zoning to pave the way for Contraband and any other liquor producers that might follow. At this same point, Hay Camp Brewing had moved into its newly renovated building with extra space for other businesses.

Jerry called in favors from his decades as a custom painter, and Randy did the same from his careers in military and law enforcement. Renovation of their new space in the Hay Camp building began in earnest. It took months to turn the former car dealership and medical laundry facility into what it is today. There was so much dust and debris that, according to Jerry, it looked like a "Zombie apocalypse movie set" because at one point it was a mock hospital emergency room, as well.

Jerry and Randy started by removing the garage doors and laundry ramps from the former laundry area. They also had to get rid of a nine-ton heating system large enough for Randy to fit his entire six-foot-plus body inside with room to spare. Two weeks of work went into cutting and removing the steam pipes. Next, over 18 inches of concrete had to be jackhammered and taken away before redoing the plumbing, electrical and HVAC systems.

This was so much work, but many friends supported Jerry's and Randy's efforts by helping with construction and renovation. The unique back bar they designed themselves, and then a friend built it for them. The two had worked in enough bars in their pasts that they knew exactly what to do and what not to do in their design. This bar is

"The cast and crew were phenomenal, and the performances absolutely brilliant."

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twice as wide as most bars, allowing space for multiple bartenders. The ice machine was placed right next to the bar for ease of access. A second speed well was installed for an additional area for sample serving.

All this help and handiwork made it possible for Jerry and Randy to meet their goal of creating an environment that felt like everybody's neighborhood hangout—warm and cozy, welcoming and friendly. The goal was to have the feel of “an old-school corner bar.” In addition, costs were kept to a minimum with these savings passed on to the customers. Bottle and cocktail prices are kept low, and entertainment options are plentiful.

Jerry and Randy divide and conquer most duties. Jerry is the distiller and makes all the liqueurs, which is an incredible undertaking. However, do not think Randy gets off easily. He does the legwork of licensing, distribution, and shipping to other states. This is no small job, considering every single flavor has to have its formula submitted and approved by the TTB before bottling and sale. Currently, Black Hills Contraband



spirits are distributed in South Dakota, North Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Illinois, but Randy is always looking to expand out-of-state options for sales.

Together they developed the cocktail recipes, after much experimentation...and quite a bit of fun. Both work the bar and the floor of the establishment every day—mixing drinks, doing dishes, and serving customers. Free small samples of the liqueurs are given to help customers decide what to drink. These

samples are always served at room temperature. This is important because as Jerry comments, “Being chilled hides flavors. It also covers the burn and any flaws.”

Jerry's family recipe for his distilled liquor is a proprietary secret. With a twinkle in his eye, he will tell only a few parts of the formula. Each batch starts with 100 percent corn that is distilled into a 190-proof spirit. He hand-caramelizes the sugars he uses, and then blends in other ingredients that add different flavors, depending on what he is making. Jerry's method allows him to produce many different types of liquor. Currently, Black Hills Contraband makes over 40 different products for purchase on location, with 14 of those for off-premise sale. Liqueurs, vodkas, and gins are made in many different flavors, including watermelon, vanilla, coconut, spice, peach, Irish cream...the list literally goes on and on.

Jerry commented that “almost everything you get here will be from this region.” Black Hills Contraband serves local craft beers from

breweries such as Lost Cabin and Contraband's neighbor, Hay Camp. They also have wine from downtown Rapid City winery Firehouse Wine Cellars. The snack case is filled with Dots Pretzels and popcorn from North Dakota and jerky from nearby Sturgis. Soft pretzels are made fresh at the Pretzel Place in the Rushmore Mall, while pizzas are flash frozen for the trip and shipped directly from Firehouse Pizzas in Minnesota.

Jerry and Randy's main goal is to “always keep evolving and growing” by being “very hands on.” In fact, there is “hardly ever a time when one of us is not here.” Either Jerry or Randy stay for the many special events. “We're the ones who open the doors every day and lock up at night.”

These days and nights of work continue to strengthen the bond these two men formed 20 years ago behind another bar in Rapid City. This innovative dream was only made possible after Jerry and Randy took the risk and built their own establishment—one filled with good people, good drinks, and good times. <

# How Beer is Made

With Spearfish Brewing's Nathan Venner

Brewing beer is an art form with many different interpretations of how to produce fun and interesting selections. Nathan Venner, from Spearfish Brewing, explains the basic steps of making great beer.

**Milling:** Malted barley comes in whole kernel form, and to access the starches within the kernel, husks must be cracked open using a grain mill.

through which the wort drains and is transferred to the boil kettle.

**Sparging:** As the wort is being removed, hot water is sprayed on top of the grain bed. The hot water slows the enzymatic processes, as well as pushes the remaining sugars through the grain bed to get the best extraction of those sugars.

**Boiling:** Once all the wort is in the brew



**Fermenting:** After the boil, wort is cooled down to a temperature appropriate for fermentation. Active yeast is pitched into the cooled and aerated wort, and fermentation begins. This can be seen by the release of carbon dioxide. Active fermentation takes 3 days or more, depending on the beer.

**Maturing:** After fermentation, the yeast cells begin to go dormant and settle to the bottom of the tank. The temperature of the tank is turned down

to around 50 degrees Fahrenheit, and the beer is left at this temperature for a length of time as determined by the beer style. This maturation period allows for further development of flavor. Once this maturation period is complete, the temperature is dropped to around 32 degrees Fahrenheit to settle any remaining yeast cells so the beer is clear. At this point the beer may be filtered. The clear beer is then carbonated and packaged for consumption. <



**Mashing:** The milled grains are mixed with hot water. This steeping activates enzymes in the barley and starts to convert the starches to sugars. Steeping also extracts flavors and colors from the barley, which will determine the color and flavors of the finished product.

**Lautering:** Lautering is the term used for separating the liquid wort (unfermented beer) from the grains. The lautertun has a false bottom

kettle, it is heated to boiling for a specific time as determined by the beer style. Boiling accomplishes the following: hop isomerization, biological stability, wort condensing, protein coagulation, color change, and flavor development. Hops are added during various points of the boil. Earlier hop additions are added for beer bitterness, and later hop additions are added for flavor and aroma.



# BEER TERMS

**Ale:** A broad class of beers brewed using top-fermenting yeasts that are fermented at warmer temperatures (60°F-78°F) which result in a more fruity, complex flavor profile.

**Lager:** A broad class of beers brewed using bottom-fermenting yeasts that are fermented at cooler temperatures (42°F-55°F) for long periods of time which result in cleaner, crisper flavors.

**Blonde Ale/Golden Ale:** This is a general category for a beer that is light in color (straw to light golden), with a smooth malt flavor and low to moderate hop bitterness. These ales are very easy to drink and approachable to the craft beer novice.

**Amber/Red Ale:** This beer style falls between pale ales and brown ales and can adopt some of the characteristics of each of these styles.



The malt bill sets it apart from other styles due to the use of caramel malts giving these beers a notable caramel or toffee character. These beers can be malt dominant or hop forward, depending on the sub-style (American Amber, Irish Red, etc.).

**Porter/Stout:** Both porters and stouts are a category of ale that are distinguished by their dark colors as well as a roasted character that is often perceived as dark chocolate or coffee.

**India Pale Ale (IPA):** This beer style is characterized by high levels of alcohol and hops. The name came from this beer's popularity in British India and outposts of the British Empire. Today's American-style IPAs are perceived as moderately to highly bitter with juicy citrus, pine, and tropical fruit notes. This has been the most popular beer style in recent craft beer history.

**Wheat Beer:** This is a general category of beer that uses a high percentage of wheat malt in the recipe. German weiss-bier brewers are required to use at least 50 percent wheat malt, whereas American-style wheat beers usually contain 10 percent to 30 percent wheat malt.

**SMASH:** SMASH stands

for Single Malt and Single Hop. This is a relatively new style of beer and can fit into any general category, although these beers fall predominantly in the pale ale and IPA categories. As the name implies, a single variety of malt and a single variety of hop are used in these brews.

**Pilsner:** Pilsners are pale, golden lagers originating in the town of Pilsen, Czech Republic. Today, for most beer drinkers, pilsner is synonymous with lager. Imitation pilsners (those not brewed in Pilsen) account for 95 percent of global beer volume.

**Belgian Style:** The main discerning characteristic of this diverse class of beer is the yeast. These top-fermented beers show a uniquely Belgian character due to the yeast that is used. Some of the styles included in are lambics, Belgian strong ales, dubbels, trippels, and quadruppels.

**Sour:** An expansive term that usually means the beer is fermented with *Brettanomyces* or wild yeasts. Sour beers may also utilize *Pediococcus* and *Lactobacillus* bacteria that provide lactic acid, which gives these beers their "sour" taste. Any style of beer can be made sour. <<



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Hand-made tap handles serve Lone Pine's kombucha.



any rules or regulations allowing the commercial production of booch. So Keith worked with the state of South Dakota to create new laws.

He chuckled when he recalled the necessity of such laws because when he arrived, no one had even heard of it. A representative at the South Dakota Department of Revenue said, "What the hell is kombucha?"

The introduction of a new product didn't mean the state was against him, though. In fact, Keith had nothing but good words to say about the process of making kombucha legal. "These guys are awesome. The state has been fantastic to work with."

Keith and the state then created a new license for kombucha by finding a category for his unique product, and Lone Pine possessed the first commercial license in South Dakota.

Although new to this state, the production of kombucha actually goes back over 2,000 years. There are several stories of its origination, but it probably was first fermented somewhere in Asia. Keith believes the most realistic story is that tea was left sitting out. Fruit flies got in it and started the fermentation. Back then fermented foods were common because of the lack of refrigeration, and kombucha became a staple of many diets.

Even for those that don't believe in booch's incredible anti-aging properties that make it a possible "fountain of youth," it is hard to deny the many other health benefits credited to the

beverage. It promotes healthy bacteria in the gut, balances hormones in the body, supports healthy liver functions, boosts metabolism, improves digestion and bowel function, rebuilds connective tissue, boosts energy, reduces blood pressure, relieves headaches and migraines, reduces the chance of kidney stones, heals eczema, treats ulcers, clears yeast infections, lowers glucose levels...and on and on and on.

Kombucha starts with a tea and sugar blend, and like every brewer, Keith has his own formula. Then a fermentation starter must be added—think of a sour

dough bread starter. This must be 20 percent of the original solution. Lone Pine's first starter came from Keith's neighbor in Montana and was used in Lone Pine's Bozeman production. Then he brought several hundred gallons to Rapid City to be the starter here.

The starter and tea ferment for anywhere from 35 to 40 days. The goal is for a specific ph and sugar content, so fermentation time varies depending on the ingredients of each batch. The cycle continues as 20 percent of each batch is saved for the next, and more kombucha is started.

## To your health!

It's been called the "tea of immortality." A beverage that has been said to destroy free radicals, aid in cell regeneration, and rebuild connective tissue.

Neither "panacea" nor "snake oil"—this beverage is kombucha, made in downtown Rapid City by Keith and Cindi Houdascelt at Lone Pine Kombucha.

Keith started brewing "booch" on his kitchen counter when he lived in Bozeman, MT, working as a full-time custom home builder. He had a neighbor that came over to harvest Keith's raspberries and plums. Keith inquired how they would be used, and the neighbor stated kombucha. Keith was encouraged to try fermenting his own, and he did.

He found he was quite good at it and started fermenting his booch and sharing it with others. Soon he was making several hundred gallons a month. Wanting to learn the trade from more

than just a home brewer's perspective, Keith had the lucky opportunity to build a custom home for a master kombucha brewer in Bozeman. In return, the brewer took Keith under his wing. Keith basically did an apprenticeship. "I spent about six months with him, just working with him on all aspects of brewing and different equipment."

Keith decided to look into the requirements and licenses to brew on a commercial scale in Bozeman. After working a large construction project in Lone Pine, CA., Keith had the capital to start his new business. He drew inspiration from the town's name—it fit his business and his location—so he named his new Bozeman brewery Lone Pine Kombucha. He produced kombucha there for two years. However, he got busy enough that it was difficult to ferment the amount he was and

still have his construction business. Keith had reached a point that it was time to consider retiring from home building and start brewing full time.

At the same time, he was thinking of a relocation to the Black Hills. He had become weary of the pace of life in Bozeman; it had changed since his growing up there. No longer was it a slow, relaxed place to live. Keith saw Rapid City as a version of Bozeman from 30 years ago.

The Black Hills had the kind of recreational activities Keith liked: hiking, biking, motorcycling, and boating. His buying power was greater here after the sale of his property in Montana. But most importantly, there was no one in the region making kombucha on a commercial scale at that time.

There was no one in the entire state. In fact, the state didn't even have

At this point, all-natural, organic, and GMO-free ingredients are added for flavor, and a second fermentation begins. Fresh fruits and herbs sit in the booch for several days as the natural acids leech out the colors and flavors. Considered finished, the beverage is kegged and refrigerated to slow the fermentation process, but Lone Pine Kombucha is a living product. "We have to stick to the traditional kombucha," Keith maintains. It is not pasteurized or filtered, and every 12 ounces has around 2 billion live bacteria.

What customers will *not* find in Lone Pine Kombucha is a lot of sugar. Keith makes sure to keep the sugar fewer than 3 grams for every 8-ounce serving, which also helps keep the calorie count low—just 25 calories for the same amount. Pasteurized booch and large commercial brewers will have 8, 14, 16, or even more than 20 grams of sugar per serving! In addition, pasteurization kills many of the live cultures that make the drink appealing for its health benefits.

One of the largest misconceptions about booch is that it is an alcoholic beverage. Keith explained why it is actually not alcohol like other fermented beverages. "The process has yeast that converts sugar to alcohol, but the bacteria then consumes the alcohol, a bacterial fermentation." Lone Pine runs less than a quarter of a percent of alcohol, and Keith adds, "By federal law we have to stay under half a percent."

Keith and his wife Cindi brew over 50 recipes throughout the year, from winter flavors like chocolate cherry and chai



spice to summer treats like watermelon and kiwi. Ginger, cranberry-orange, chai, and lemon are customer favorites. Because of the rotating menu and seasonal flavors, some favorites may not be available for five or six months. This ever-changing menu means there is always something new to try.

The best place to try this healthy drink is to visit the tap room in downtown Rapid City. However, the Houdascelts work very hard distributing their product all over the state. Some of their best selling retailers are the craft breweries scattered throughout the Black Hills. Although mostly West River, expansion is already planned to Pierre and other locations East River. Lone Pine is currently available in Sheridan, WY, and will soon

be found in Gillette and Buffalo, WY, as well. Glasses and growlers of all sizes can be filled at these locations and enjoyed then or taken home and consumed at a later time, always remembering that kombucha is a living product and needs to be refrigerated and sipped soon after purchase.

Keith and Cindi both appreciate how well they and their product have been received. Though booch has been trendy on the coasts for nearly two decades, Black Hills residents are happy to have a new alternative choice that fits the healthy, outdoor lifestyles of many in the state. The Houdascelts "get thanked all the time for being here, for doing what we are doing."

This warm reception means that during the summer season, Lone Pine will be open additional days and hours. It also means that Keith and Cindi might bring on some additional help, a difference from what they have been doing—just the two of them working production, sales, distribution, and tap room.

Kombucha—the elixir of life—is filled with antioxidants, probiotics, and bacteria-fighting properties. It offers multiple health benefits. It replaces sugary, unhealthy soft drinks. Lone Pine Kombucha blazed trails for similar beverages and started a new industry in the state of South Dakota. Its proprietors, Keith and Cindi Houdascelt, need the extra energy and stamina from the drink they produce as they work hard to bring their new product to the state of South Dakota. <<

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# The elements of **BEER**

with Firehouse  
Brewing Co.'s Mike Kilroy



## WATER

The average beer is made up of 95% water. It is the most important ingredient in the brewing process and can deeply influence the finished product. Water from different locations can, and will, affect the taste of beer.

## GRAINS

Grains provide the body of beer as well as the fermentable sugars that will later create alcohol when eaten by the yeast. There are different kinds of grains used.

**Barley:** The most common grain used as the base of beer is barley. Its starches are easily extractable with sugar readily converted to "food" for hungry yeast. Brewers use different kinds of

barley. Most prefer two-row barley for its extractable starches. Six-row barley is often used when producing beer with additional grains or fruits because the six-row's enzymes more easily convert these other grains' and fruits' starches to sugars.

**Corn:** Corn is used to make beer sweeter and give a silky texture to the finished product.

**Wheat:** Using wheat gives a different texture and flavor to beer; it increases mouthfeel, which makes the beer taste bigger and bolder when drinking.

**Oats:** Oats also produce a silky mouthfeel and fuller body for beer.

**Rye:** Brewers use rye to give an earthy and unique taste to their beers.

**Rice:** Rice has starches that are very easily converted to sugar, and it makes very light-flavored and light-bodied beers.

**Adjuncts:** Brewers can add other ingredients at certain points of the brewing process. Some of these adjuncts are added in the early stages with the grains. Brown sugar, molasses, and honey are such products that lend more flavor to the beer. Brown sugar and molasses give caramel characteristics and can add some astringency. Yeasts eat the honey during the fermentation process and then leave honey's aroma behind to add complexity to the beer.

## HOPS

Hops are small, green, cone-shaped flowers that grow on a vine. They are filled with resins that can give flavor, aroma, bitterness, and/or balance, depending on what step they are added during the brewing process. Hops also act as a natural preservative for beer. There are dozens of different varieties of hops that provide their own qualities to beer.

When hops are added early and to the boil, they give bitterness to beer and are called bittering hops. When added later in the brew, hops add some bitterness but give more aromatic and citrus characteristics.

Dry hopping is a technique when hops are added after the ferment to lend even more aroma and citrus flavor.

Hops contain a substance called lupulin, said to be a mild

antidepressant and calming agent. Many claim it can be used as a pain killer and anesthetic. There are also those who put hops in their pillowcases because they believe lupulin helps with sleep.

## YEAST

Finally, beer needs yeast to ferment. Yeast eats sugars from the grain and produces alcohol and carbon dioxide. After a week or two of gorging itself and reproducing, the environment becomes toxic for the yeast, and the yeast goes dormant, signaling fermentation is finished. There are hundreds of different strains of yeast, and beer yeasts are different from yeasts used to make wine. By producing such unique flavors as apple, banana, or clove—just to name a few—these different strains have a dramatic effect on the aroma and taste of the final product. <<



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*"Ale yeast is like throwing a handful of gravel into a clear lake. It is just going to drop out of suspension. Lager yeast takes a lot longer to settle out. You want it to settle out because it will remetabolize these off flavors."*

— Nathan Venner



Jon Marek, general manager of Spearfish Brewing, multi-tasking in the brew house.

## DEVOTED TO BEER

You might say Nathan Venner, brewer at Spearfish Brewing in Spearfish, SD, is a pretty interesting guy.

Brewery manager Jon Marek agrees. Jon grinned as he told the story of Nathan's aquaponic system in Nathan's Lander, WY, apartment. It was a two-level system with fish and water tanks on the main level and a pump system that circulated the water. This allowed Nathan to grow a garden on the second level.

This gives just a tiny peek into Nathan's pioneering mind.

A mind that became devoted to beer while he was pursuing English and philosophy degrees in the Honors Program at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. He actually skipped classes to be in the science library reading about brewing. It might have been an odd reason to miss class, but it fueled Nathan's growing passion for beer.

When he started home brewing, he took clothes out of his closet to build shelves and make beer there. At any given time, he had 12 kinds of beer, brewing well over his legal limit of 100 gallons.

He took this hobby very seriously and started building his own equipment. Nathan found every part of the process creative and exciting. He started

picking up shifts, cleaning tanks, and cleaning kegs at Altitude Chophouse in Laramie. At the same time, the owners were moving to Boulder, CO, and Nathan—then age 25—took over as head brewer in August of 2006.

"I had no idea what they were thinking," Nathan chuckled at this huge undertaking at such a young age. "I didn't realize how much I didn't know about professional brewing until I was actually in charge and had to basically answer for everything. But we had a ton of fun. We were really successful. I had a lot of assistant brewers go on to be head brewers. Being near the Front Range, being so close to Denver, Fort Collins, and Boulder, I was able to make a lot of friends in the industry."

Nathan then moved to be brewer at Lander Brewing in Lander, WY, for four years. This is where Jon and Nathan's paths first crossed.

The day Jon moved to Lander he saw the brewery needed an assistant. Jon thought it sounded like a fun place to work, and he became the assistant brewer, working with and learning from Nathan.

Soon Nathan was given an incredible opportunity. Whitney and Ryan Wordeman and Micheala and Brian Meredith—Nathan's current partners—approached him about opening a

brewery in Spearfish. They wanted Nathan to be their brewer, and they gave him carte blanche to make the necessary decisions to set up the brewery. Nathan knew Jon was originally from South Dakota and wanted to return. Nathan asked Jon if he wanted to join in the Spearfish endeavor, and Jon jumped at the chance to work with Nathan again.

With his manager in place, Nathan moved to planning the space for use, cleanup, and safety. Although having a brand-new building with new equipment is every brewer's dream, it was actually the floors that were one of Nathan's favorite parts. He planned the perfect slope and drainage for cleanup. He spent time thinking of how the ingredients would come in the back garage door; where the water system would be placed; and where the boil kettles, fermentation tanks, ale tanks, and lager tanks should be. Nathan even made sure there was enough space around every tank and piece of equipment to be accessed from all angles, for ease of production and for safety.

This innovative thought process was very important to Nathan's philosophy of brewing. He claimed, "Basically, my job as a brewer is to create an environment for yeast to ferment wort. Yeast makes beer. I just create an

environment for yeast to make beer."

This environment starts before Nathan ever begins brewing. As his apartment aquaponic experiment showed, he takes water very, very seriously. This is still true.

Nathan imitates the water sources of traditional beer-making regions. For instance, when making a light lager, he is going to imitate the water profile of Pilsen in the Czech Republic, the region for which pilsners are named. If he is making a brown ale, he will start with chalky water similar to Dover, England, known for its delicious browns.

In order to create waters like those around the world, Nathan first sends the water through a carbon filtration system to get rid of chlorine and fluoride. Next, water goes through a reverse osmosis (RO) system until it is the proper pH and mineral content for the style of beer Nathan is making. Then it is blended with Spearfish water. Sometimes after the water is carbon filtered, he might use straight Spearfish water; other times, he might blend Spearfish water with RO water. He might even add mineral additions to get the exact water for the style of beer.

"Most of the pH science and the water



hardness science happens in the hot water tank," Nathan comments, "which is three times the size of our process, our boil kettle and mash tun." This allows Nathan to do two batches of beer at a time and have extra water for the sparge and the other steps of brewing. All the

water needed for the entire process is covered, so no drop of water used is coming straight from city water.

The next innovation happens within the brewing process itself, and it deals with what Jon proclaims is "the biggest innovation in beer's history: lagering.

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Ale is so much older than lager. Even though lagers are hundreds of years old, in the realm of beer history," Jon says, "lagering is still 'new.'"

Spearfish Brewing's way of making lagers is unusual—Nathan

uses a horizontal lagering tank.

Lager yeast ferments colder and is a bottom fermenting yeast. It produces a dryer, crisper, smoother beer. However, lagers take significantly longer than ales. From beginning to end, an ale can take

two to three weeks, fermenting at room temperature. Lagers can take well over six weeks and require cellar temperature.

During fermentation, the lager yeast produces by-products like dimethyl sulfate and diacetyl that can have an off flavor, making the finished product unpleasant. The yeast must stay in suspension after fermentation to remetabolize those by-products.

Nathan compares lager yeasts in suspension to throwing a handful of silt into a lake. "Ale yeast is like throwing a handful of gravel into a clear lake. It is just going to drop out of suspension. Lager yeast takes a lot longer to settle out. You want it to settle out because it will remetabolize these off flavors."

In a horizontal tank, yeast settles out faster because of the larger surface area. The yeast only has to drop four feet instead of 16 feet. Instead of taking 12 weeks for particles to settle, it takes 4 weeks. "We are able to keep up with lager production by laying the beers down sideways and not rushing our beers, not compromising quality to keep up with production."

Nathan has yet another cutting-

edge technique to please even more beer lovers.

There is an enzyme that is present in malted barley that breaks down gluten. It naturally occurs in such a small amount that it has little effect on the gluten of beer. However, it has been isolated and sold in concentrated form.

Nathan adds this enzyme to the ferment of all his beers, so it breaks down almost all the gluten. Spearfish Brewing can't say its beer is gluten free because Nathan still uses glutenous products, but the gluten is below 20 parts per million, so it is gluten-reduced beer. (In the EU, if beer is below 20 parts per million, it can be called gluten free.)

The additional enzyme doesn't affect the flavor. If anything, it improves the overall shelf life and stability of the beer without hurting the body. From taste alone, no one would ever know the

beer was gluten-reduced.

In the end, Nathan can make these innovations work because he knows who he is as a brewer. "I can not make a good coffee stout if I can't first make a good stout. I need to know the styles first in order to experiment. I put a lot of time and effort into the base beer before moving on to additions to the beer."

Nathan's curious spirit was evident with his first aquaponic experiments at home. These experiences led him to be the exceptional brewer he is today. He has a clear vision for Spearfish Brewing as something that hasn't been seen before in the Black Hills. Nathan Venner has room to experiment, but it is experimentation only after he masters the traditional approaches. He is not making something brand new; he is creating unique products rooted in the traditions of hundreds of years. <<

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*"Sours allow so much freedom in creativity that I will never run out of sour projects or get bored. Plus, they are kind of a wine/beer hybrid—and that's right up my alley!"*

— Sandi Vojta



Sandi Vojta manages her barrels for aging beer at Miner Brewing Company.

# A HOUSE ALL ITS OWN

To say that innovation with fermentation is in Sandi Vojta's blood is actually no overstatement. As the wine maker at Prairie Berry Winery and brewer at Miner Brewing Company, Sandi is the fifth generation to make fermented beverages in the state of South Dakota.

She remembered her first fermentation, even though she was only four years old. She was experimenting with her mother's bread yeast in the kitchen. From this early age, her family's European heritage with wine making intrigued Sandi and started her lifelong quest to produce beverages in her home state.

Her initial innovation was Prairie Berry Winery, the second winery in South Dakota and the first in the Black Hills. Then she started making beer at Prairie Berry's sister company, Miner Brewing. At both places she used the same principles of creativity during production. Whether it be the fruits or vegetables Sandi was using or the styles she was making, there was always something unusual, always something unique.

One of the most unusual beverages Sandi produces is a sour—a current popular style of beer with thousands of years of history behind it. Traditionally in some parts of Europe, wild yeasts were allowed to start fermentations

of beer. As Sandi stated, "This was long before the antimicrobial properties of hops started to be utilized around 500 years ago."

These natural yeasts were unpredictable, and fermentation could take months and maturation could take years before a very acidic, thus sour tasting, beverage was completed. Many immigrants coming to the United States would have been accustomed to this flavor in their beer, but time, taste, and sterile production practices made this type of ale much less common.

"Sour" can be a pretty expansive term. Sandi explains, "Sours generally consist of beer that is fermented with *Brettanomyces* (Brett) or wild yeast. Also typical to sour beer production is the utilization of *Pediococcus* and *Lactobacillus*." Brett gives the "funky earthiness, fruit, and floral, while the *Pedio* and *Lacto* bring on the sour." Some producers also get the tart flavor from fruit additions during aging. This can start a second fermentation. Any traditional beer style can be turned into and then classified as a sour.

Because these yeasts and microbes can be hard to predict, when making sours in this style, many producers do not like to have this production area near their other sterile, modern production tanks. However, these

production areas do not have to be separated. There are brewers all over the country who produce sours in the same facility as other beers.

Sandi does use the former school of thought when she makes sours; she uses a separate building on the Prairie Berry/Miner Brewing campus. "We are fortunate to have a great space to keep our sour beer program separate from our regular brews. I also sleep better producing sours in a separate building."

Although a very historic beverage, the sour trend in the United States the last decade has flourished because the beers lend themselves to experimentation, just at the same time as the American beer scene was becoming a mecca for unique and one-of-a-kind brews. Beer lovers were exposed to many flavors and styles. This fits Sandi's brewing style perfectly. She loves to try new and different styles and flavors. "In the same way there is a beer style out there for everyone and every palate, there is a sour style out there for everyone willing to experiment and find what they like."

Sandi loves that people who aren't fans of beer often enjoy sours. Many lovers of traditional beer also like to drink different styles or try something different, and sours fit that scenario well. Finally, Sandi comments, "They

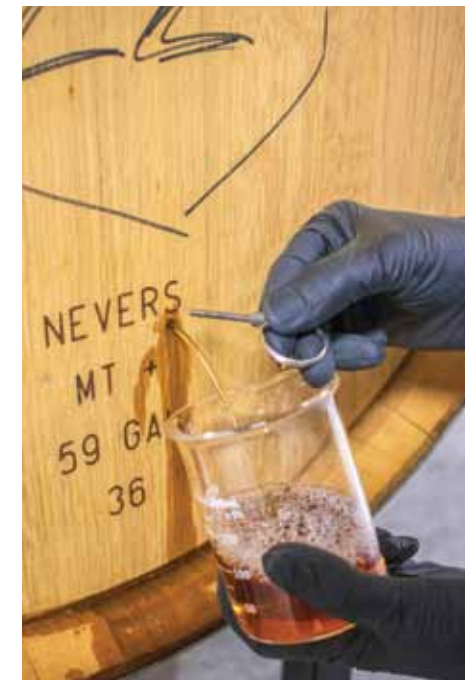
also tend to bridge the gap between beer and wine." Another very big benefit of sours in her eyes.

Sandi's enjoyment of sour production leads back to her first love—wine. "I enjoy experimenting with everything I can get my hands on. Sours allow so much freedom and creativity that I will never run out of sour projects or get bored. Plus, they are kind of a wine/beer hybrid—and that's right up my alley!"

Sandi's creative thinking shows itself in every project—past, present, and future. She has an old dairy tank handed down from a cousin that she looks forward to using as a coolship—an open-topped fermentation vessel—for spontaneous sour fermentation. This tank was used at Prairie Berry Winery until the winery production grew too large. Sandi's plan is to allow fermentations in this unusual coolship to be started by the wild yeasts on the property. These brews will show different characteristics from those yeasts. Based on the characteristics Sandi is wanting, she will choose some wild yeasts over others. Then these specific wild yeast strains from the Prairie Berry/Miner Brewing campus will be propagated and utilized for future sours Sandi will make.

In addition to unique fermentation vessels, sours also lend themselves to traditional aging techniques in barrels. Barrel aging is not specific to sours, but it is yet another tool Sandi likes for this particular style of beer, again letting her wine production background blend into her brewing skills. Brewers

mature beer in barrels for the same reasons wine is aged in oak: aromas, flavors, and complexity are imparted through time in barrel. Barrels that are retired from Prairie Berry's wine program then go right back to work making Miner Brewing Company's beer.



Currently, there are several batches of Flemish Reds, Flanders, and lambics aging in oak in Sandi's sour house.

Sandi explains the reasoning behind this, "Wild yeast and microbes also burrow into the wood of oak barrels, helping establish flavor consistency. As in wine production, oak barrels allow a

small diffusion of oxygen, allowing the wild yeast to slowly consume the wood sugar, continuing fermentation in pursuit of the much desired high attenuation."

A very special sour is another project that intertwines the art and science of making wine with the art and science of making beer. Miner Half of Ten is a Belgian golden that has been maturing in white wine oak barrels for four years. It was produced from five different fruits—wild plum, crab apple, apple, cherries, and golden currants—in honor of Miner Brewing Company's five year anniversary.

So much time in barrel has created a very complex sour. It is a hazy shade of peach with intense, yet pleasant, aromas. Notes of stone fruit, crab apple, and chardonnay permeate the nose. Tart citrus notes and a mild earthiness hit the palate and persist through to a dry finish. Sandi sees this as the perfect beer to celebrate Miner Brewing Company's fifth year!

The innovation Sandi Vojta has brought to both the wine and beer industry of the Black Hills was evident even as a toddler. Her inquisitive nature with fermentation led her to exploring the art and science of wine at Prairie Berry Winery. Then she used her experimental nature with yeast to brew some of the most unique beers in the region. Her sour house is both traditional and innovative, while being incredibly rare. It shows her personal style and her devotion to her craft, a craft passed down through five generations in her home state of South Dakota. <<

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# brewery

## DIRECTORY

**THE KNUCKLE BREWING COMPANY, 918 HARLEY DAVIDSON WAY, STURGIS:** The Knuckle shows all the best that is Sturgis, SD. Learn more about the world-famous event that takes place every August while drinking one of The Knuckle's many brews.

**CROW PEAK BREWING COMPANY, 125 W. HIGHWAY 14, SPEARFISH:** The first Black Hills production-only brewery, Crow Peak Brewing has twelve original beers on tap. Sip a brew in front of the growler-shaped fireplace inside or the custom-made fire pit outside.

**SPEARFISH BREWING COMPANY, 714 N. MAIN ST. #130, SPEARFISH:** The tap room serves fourteen beers. There are also non-alcoholic drink options, including kombucha produced in the region. For delicious food, order from the small bites menu or visit Red Water Kitchen next door.

**SAWYER BREWING COMPANY, 2537 YUKON PLACE, SPEARFISH:** Spearfish's newest brewery produces diverse and unique beers. Another unique feature is the built-in wood fire oven which bakes delicious pizzas for guests. Sip and eat with an amazing view of Spearfish Creek.

**DAKOTA SHIVERS BREWING, 717 W. MAIN ST., LEAD:** Located on historic Main Street in Lead, Dakota Shivers is quaint and friendly. Brewer and owner Linda has six beers on tap with a "crowler" system—canned growlers—giving the option to take beer home.

**FIREHOUSE BREWING COMPANY, 610 MAIN ST., RAPID CITY:** Firehouse has been brewing beer for over twenty-five years at its current historic location. In addition to beer, enjoy family-friendly food in the restaurant that serves American-style pub food.

**LOST CABIN BEER COMPANY, 1401 W. OMAHA ST., RAPID CITY:** Lost Cabin focuses on regional ingredients, sourcing fruits, spices, grains, and hops from South Dakota or the surrounding areas whenever possible. A variety of ales and lagers are produced, with 12 beers on tap.

**HAY CAMP BREWING, 601 KANSAS CITY ST., RAPID CITY:** Located in a recently-renovated, multi-use building, Hay Camp serves small-batch, hand-crafted ales. Customers can also appreciate the regular events and concerts hosted here.

**DAKOTA POINT BREWING, 405 CANAL ST. #1200, RAPID CITY:** Dakota Point provides an inviting and friendly experience in the historic Landstrom's Building. Choose from English, Scottish, Irish, or American style ales while sitting on the large outdoor patio.

**ZYMURCRACY BREWING, 4624 CREEK DRIVE #6, RAPID CITY:** With the mission to "connect people through craft beer," Zymurcracy produces many different styles of beer, creating an ever-evolving tap list. Food trucks frequently visit for the possibility of diverse bites with the diverse beers.

**MINER BREWING COMPANY, 23845 U.S. HIGHWAY 385, HILL CITY:** Brewer Sandi Vojta crafts beers, meads, ciders, and sours as a fifth generation South Dakotan. Enjoy these special brews while playing a game or listening to music on the lawn.

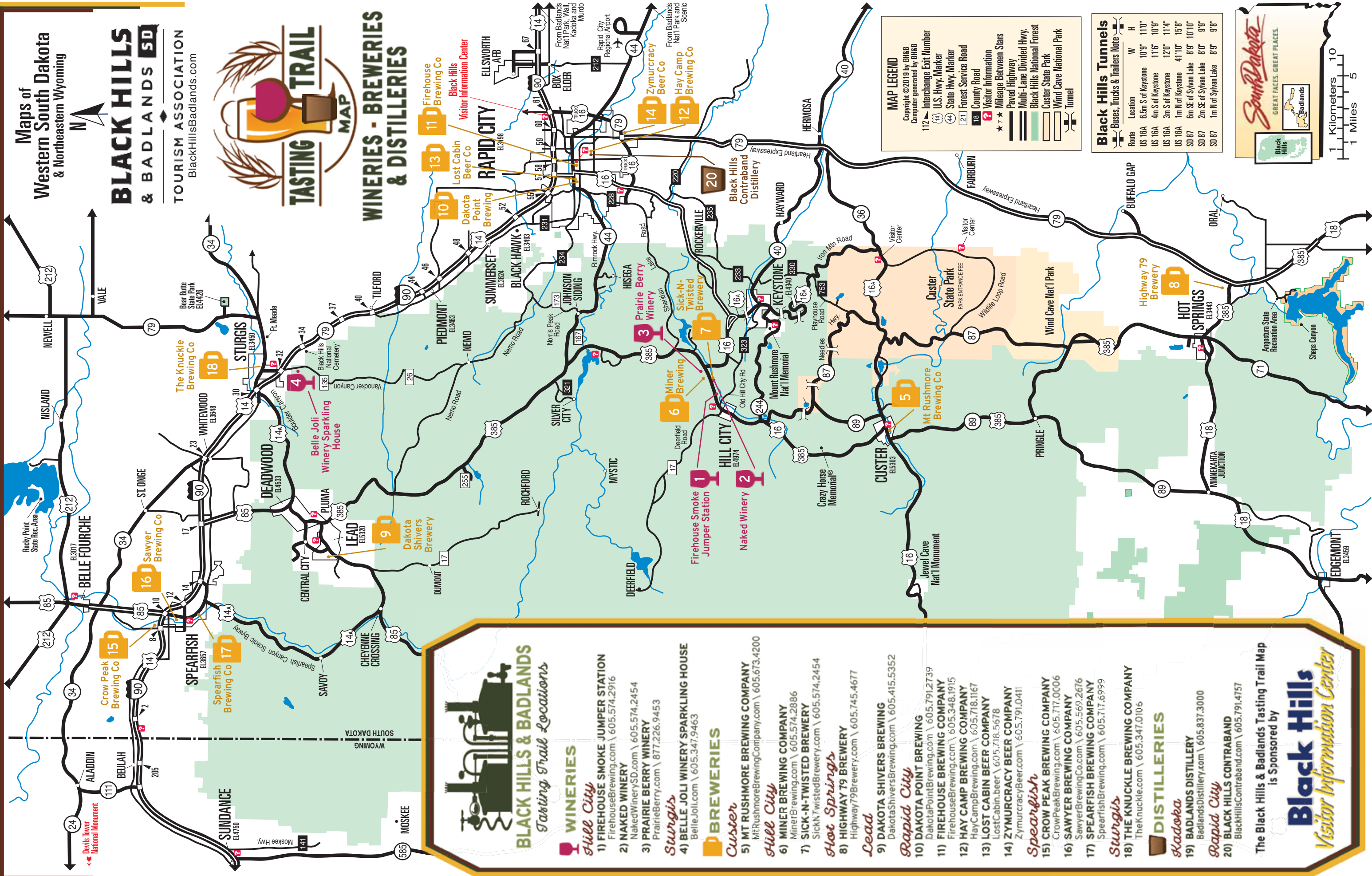
**SICK-N-TWISTED BREWING, 23851 HIGHWAY 385, HILL CITY:** Sick-N-Twisted serves up to 14 original brews, including many seasonal favorites. Sick-N-Twisted also cans many of its selections, making it easy to take home and savor the fun after leaving the brewery.

**MT. RUSHMORE BREWING COMPANY, 140 MT. RUSHMORE RD., CUSTER:** Mt. Rushmore Brewing attempts to pay homage to its namesake through its local focus on its beer, kitchen, and cocktails. The entire establishment is family and pet friendly with a view of the Mickelson Trail.

**HIGHWAY 79 BREWING COMPANY, 27631 SD, HIGHWAY 79, HOT SPRINGS:** Highway 79 Brewing currently features eight of its own brews as part of a larger thirty-two tap system. The "scratch kitchen" prepares all food items in house to pair with the extensive beer list.



**WINERIES - BREWERIES  
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- 18 County Road
- 2 Visitor Information
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US 16A	1m N of Keystone	41'10"	15'8"
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- 6) **MINER BREWING COMPANY**  
MinerBrewing.com \ 605.574.2886
  - 7) **SICK-N-TWISTED BREWERY**  
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- Hot Springs*
- 8) **HIGHWAY 79 BREWERY**  
Highway79Brewery.com \ 605.745.4677
- Lead*
- 9) **DAKOTA SHIVERS BREWING**  
DakotaShiversBrewing.com \ 605.415.5352
- Rapid City*
- 10) **DAKOTA POINT BREWING**  
DakotaPointBrewing.com \ 605.791.2739
  - 11) **FIREHOUSE BREWING COMPANY**  
FirehouseBrewing.com \ 605.348.1915
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HayCampBrewing.com \ 605.718.1167
  - 13) **LOST CABIN BEER COMPANY**  
LostCabin.beer \ 605.718.5678
  - 14) **ZYMURCRACY BEER COMPANY**  
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- Spearfish*
- 15) **CROW PEAK BREWING COMPANY**  
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# winery & distillery

## DIRECTORY

**BELLE JOLÍ WINERY, 3951 VANOCKER CANYON RD., STURGIS:** Belle Jolí Sparkling House provides scenic views on its patio overlooking the vineyard. This is the spot to drink South Dakota sparkling wines, all made in the traditional method, the same used in making Champagne from France. Sunday brunches with Belle Jolí mimosas are a special treat.

**BELLE JOLÍ TASTING ROOM, 594 LOWER MAIN ST., DEADWOOD:** Taste Belle Jolí still wines at the Deadwood tasting room. Sit on the outdoor patio watching all that is Main Street Deadwood while enjoying your tasting or purchase a glass or bottle of wine to truly drink in the atmosphere of Deadwood and the Black Hills.

**FIREHOUSE WINE CELLARS, 620 MAIN ST., RAPID CITY:** Firehouse Wine Cellars makes a wine for every palate. Award winning wines from locally grown grapes are available, as are delicious wines made from traditional grapes. Do a tasting of the diverse wines or order a glass to enjoy with a house-made pizza. Live music is featured every Friday and Saturday night.

**FIREHOUSE SMOKEJUMPER STATION, 23858 US-385, HILL CITY:** Taste both Firehouse Wine Cellars wine and Firehouse Brewing Company beer at this new location. Order house-made soups, sandwiches, and desserts created to pair with wine and beer. Sit out back with a view of Spring Creek while listening to both the soothing water and the frequent live music.

**PRAIRIE BERRY WINERY, 23837 HIGHWAY 385, HILL CITY:** The first winery in the Black Hills, Prairie Berry is a unique South Dakota experience. The winery makes wines from fruit—like its famous Red Ass Rhubarb—and grapes—many sourced from vineyards in the state. The wines have garnered over 1000 national and international awards.

**NAKED WINERY, 23851 HIGHWAY 385, HILL CITY:** The place to sip wine and be entertained is Naked Winery. Order meat and cheese plates or gourmet pizzas to pair with wines that might cause a blush while taking the “pecksniffery” out of the

beverage. Sit and relax on the shaded patio or attend one of the fun events hosted throughout the year.

**NAKED WINERY/SICK-N-TWISTED, 692 UPPER MAIN ST., DEADWOOD:** There is a second location for entertainment and fun while drinking Naked Winery wine and Sick-N-Twisted beer. Main Street in Deadwood hosts another option to sip and shop at the mercantile store while doing a tasting and experiencing beverages that are entertaining as well as tasty.

**TWISTED PINE WINERY, 124 E. MAIN ST., HILL CITY:** The place to taste the largest sampling of South Dakota wines is Twisted Pine in downtown Hill City. The tasting room features wines from every corner of the state. Dakota Made foods and merchandise are also available. Gourmet olive oils and delightful cheeses can be purchased.

**CALAMITY JANE'S WINERY AND MERCANTILE, 512 MT. RUSHMORE RD., CUSTER:** Start your day with coffee at the coffee bar. Then, move to the other great beverage of the world—wine—with tastings of wines from all over the state of South Dakota. Wines from additional regions of the United States and world are also available.

**BADLANDS DISTILLERY, 425 SD HIGHWAY 73, KADOKA:** Neighboring the Black Hills, Badlands Distillery uses local corn and a traditional mash recipe to create its bourbon. The distilled spirit is then aged in new, white-oak barrels for authentic style. Other flavors and varieties of liquors are also produced, ranging from honey to cinnamon to jalapeño.

**BLACK HILLS CONTRABAND DISTILLERY, 601 KANSAS CITY ST. #6, RAPID CITY:** With flavors too numerous to mention, try a small sample of anything that sounds interesting. Then drink one of the specialty cocktails from the menu for the full experience. Enjoy pizzas made just for Contraband or a variety of snacks from the region while singing karaoke on Tuesdays.

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In South Dakota, the growth of grapevines comes with bated breath—always wondering what Mother Nature may throw at the vineyard next. Mike Gould's vines at Old Folsom Vineyard are no exception. From bud break to harvest, Gould watches and worries until, finally, the grapes come to Firehouse Wine Cellars ... and the concern about next season begins.

# Growth

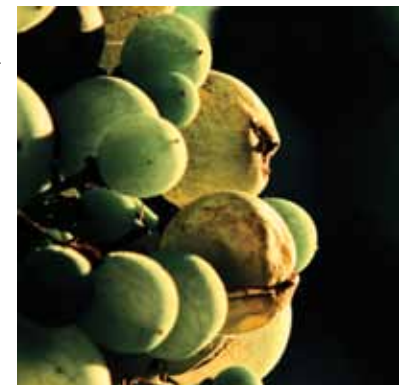


**1. Bud Break:** After winter's dormancy, spring shows itself in the vines with bud break. From tiny green buds, leaves form on the vines. The leaves sprout shoots and other leaves until the green canopy forms.

**2. Flowering:** Small clusters of flowers grow on the vines that are then pollinated. Grapevines can pollinate themselves, even without the help of other insects or elements.



**3. Fruit Set:** The flowers turn into small berries with even smaller seeds inside; this step is fruit set. The berries grow and grow and grow until they resemble actual grapes.



**4. Veraison:** When the colors of the grapes begin to turn, veraison has taken place. At this step, the acids decrease, and the sugars increase as the vines inch toward harvest and the grapes' colors deepen.

**5. Harvest:** Grapes are considered ripe when a grower or winemaker determines the fruit has the proper sugar, acid, and tannin ratio for the type and/or style of wine designated. At this time, grapes are picked and sent to the winery to become delicious wine for all to enjoy! <<



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# EVERYTHING OLD *is new again*

Wine has been made for literally thousands and thousands of years in different locations around the world. Evidence has been found in Europe and Asia dating back 6,000 years. Western Europe has had a thriving wine trade for hundreds of years. In these terms, the United States' wine industry is but a rowdy teen, still a little rebellious against its parent—the Old World producers. If that's the case, the South Dakota wine industry, at just over 20 years old, is a toddler, still learning and

developing to find its own personality. This personality, though, has proven to be an identity full of invention and creativity. Modern techniques and pure science are the backbone of the interesting wine production taking place in the Black Hills. Yet these methods are rooted in history; they go way back to the generations before, using historic knowledge paired with today's technology to show a completely new level of innovation in an industry that has taken great leaps and bounds in its short life.

## BLENDING SCIENCE AND TRADITION

In 2012, Adam Martinez tested the waters of wine making. It wasn't long after he jumped right in, getting deeper and deeper into wine. With his chemistry background, he was the lab manager when Firehouse Wine Cellars first started wine production; he was responsible for completing all the necessary lab work before, during, and after fermentation. "Like everybody who dips their toe into

the pool of the wine industry, you get drawn in. You have to go off the deep end and start making it. So I did."

The leap came when the winery increased production so the workload was too much for the brewer, who was initially making both Firehouse wine and beer. Even with a consulting winemaker from California, the fermentation of the two was too much for one person.

Adam always enjoyed wine and became fascinated by the product. It seemed a natural—although large—step to move from lab work to actual winemaker, but Adam knew that was what he wanted to do. He always found a level of dissatisfaction with the other jobs in the chemistry field, and he was excited by the prospect of working with Master Rich Tanguay, the California winemaker who guided Firehouse Wine Cellars when it initially started making wine.

Tanguay mentored Adam during trips to downtown Rapid City for wine production work. During this same time, Adam began the enology program at Washington State University. The two-pronged approach of distance learning through WSU and the hands-on learning



Winemaker Adam Martinez adds yeast to start the fermentation of his modern "field blend" at Firehouse Wine Cellars.

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with Tanguay were a perfect complement to Adam's chemistry background, and by 2016 Adam was the full-time, onsite winemaker at Firehouse Wine Cellars.

Because Adam was new to the industry and had such a solid science background, one might have thought he only used contemporary wine-making practices. While Adam loved science, he was also enamored with tradition. However, his specialty was learning what today's science teaches about historic customs. As with all traditional industries, there are certain phenomena that become legends. These kinds of wives' tales are especially prevalent in wine. Many Old World winemakers in historic regions like Europe use techniques based on these legends.

Since American wine is so new, its technology has advanced very quickly. United States winemakers have used science to confirm the reasons behind these legends and wives' tales, giving the U.S. a possible advantage with the ability to control the production techniques being used to make wines, leaving nothing to chance during fermentation.

For instance, one of the biggest differences Adam sees between

modern and traditional wine making is the *purposeful* development of flavors. Old World wine making relied on time of harvest to develop flavors, whether green, vegetal flavors or riper, fruity flavors. Winemakers today now know that it is not necessarily time of harvest but alcohol development of wine—which is linked to harvest—that influences these flavors. Early harvest equals lower sugar in the grapes, which produces less alcohol. Less alcohol equals more "green" flavors in wine. Later harvest equals higher sugar in grapes, which produces more alcohol. More alcohol gives more "baked" fruit flavors in wine.

The wives' tale was true, but not necessarily for the reason traditional practices believed.

Adam used this idea of the science confirming old techniques to develop specific flavors in wine. He mixed the old with the new ... and his newest *blend* is the perfect example of this.

A very old technique for wine making was to plant different varieties of vines together in the same vineyard. These different grapes would be harvested together and then fermented together in

the same vessel to make one wine. No blending happened after fermentation because the grapes were blended from the beginning—in the field. This "field blend" was a common practice hundreds of years ago in areas of Europe such as France, Italy, and Spain.

Field blends rarely happen today. Most vineyards now have neat rows of very clearly marked vines, all the same variety. These grapes are grown separately, harvested separately, fermented separately, and then, usually, bottled separately. White grapes are generally separate from red grapes at all points of the production process, especially bottling.

Adam ferments with the time-honored philosophy that "the best food for the grape is the 'winemaker's shadow.'" What this means is the winemaker needs to know the grapes and what they have to offer future wines. His goal is to develop flavor profiles by knowing the grapes, no matter where they grow. When a winemaker knows his grapes, he can blend grape varieties together, and not just after fermentation before bottling.

Looking to the Rhone Valley of France,

Adam decided he was going to do his own version of a field blend to create his newest wine, Stargazer. The red syrah and the white rousanne were grown and harvested separately in the Yakima Valley of Washington. They came to downtown Rapid City in cardboard totes packed with dry ice inside a refrigerated semi-trailer. As soon as they arrived, Adam put the grapes together, well before most American winemakers would blend the fruit. He crushed the red and white grapes together. The juice, skins, and seeds went into the same stainless steel container to ferment, all while commingling to enhance the best characteristics of both varieties—rousanne for backbone, body, and finish; syrah for color, tannin, and fruitiness.

Adam commented on his thought process for the unusual procedure: "To me, one of the benefits of blending the white and the red during fermentation is there are only so many anthocyanins that can be extracted. My hope in science was that adding more liquid (from the rousanne grape) would give me a chance to extract more anthocyanins from the syrah. Hoping to get a beautiful purple hue. Having the extra liquid from the white grapes allowed that to happen."

When Adam's science background sent him straight off the deep end into wine making, he had one goal—make wine people enjoy drinking. He has meshed new technologies and Old World techniques to do just that at Firehouse Wine Cellars; his Stargazer field blend is the perfect example of this.



"My wine making philosophy is that the best wine in the world is the wine you like. And I think it is our duty as winemakers to not just make what we like, but to provide enjoyment, to make something for everyone to like. It is our duty to make as many different wines as we can. To experiment. To give everyone

the chance to enjoy a wine they really like. If we stay to pure tradition, we can please some people. That's great. But using innovation with old school practices will allow us to find people that might have been missed. Isn't this the whole point of this job? If you aren't making people happy, what are you doing?" <<

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Belle Joli's Matthew Jackson and his daughter celebrate the creation of a bottle of sparkling wine.

## BLENDING HISTORY AND PLACE

When most middle-schoolers were worried about sports teams and girl cooties, Matthew Jackson—winemaker at Belle Joli Winery in Sturgis—was helping to plant his family's first vineyard.

His parents, John and Patty Jackson, had always loved wine. Wine was regularly served with their meals, and grapevines were regularly planted at their houses. In fact, John and Patty had even considered a move from the Midwest to Napa Valley, CA, when the industry there was still in its infancy.

Instead, John opened a successful dentistry practice in Belle Fourche, SD, and he and Patty raised their sons there. The Jacksons' oldest son, Christopher, followed his father into the dental practice in Belle Fourche. It appeared Matthew was on the same path to follow his father and brother.

However, the wines and vines had gotten into Matthew's spirit. He had been surrounded by the elements of making wine his whole life, and after propagating a half-acre test vineyard when he was a teenager, he couldn't get wine making out of his mind.

Instead of going to dental school in his home state of South Dakota, Matthew went to enology school at California State University, Fresno. There he learned all about growing grapes and making wine through hands-on work in the student vineyard and winery. These

were valuable experiences for Matthew because during this same time, he was already growing grapes on a much larger scale than before and making wine at Belle Joli, starting in 2007.

Matthew always knew he wanted to make sparkling wine in South Dakota from South Dakota grown grapes. The land in Champagne is known for its chalky soil; the Black Hills have lots of limestone in the soil, similar to that special French dirt. When visiting the Champagne region in their early production years, Matthew and his wife, Choi, noticed the minerality of both soils.

The acid content in grapes grown in Champagne is very high because of its northerly location in the country. This same acid structure occurs in Belle Joli's grapes because of the cool growing climate outside of Belle Fourche, where the Jackson family grows 25 acres of vines. These similar conditions were important to Matthew and Choi as she stated, "All the elements we needed to make traditional method wines existed here, and we were excited about that."

As Matthew explained, the tradition of sparkling wine runs deep in France. The first bottle of Champagne on record



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occurred in 1531. Dom Perignon came to the region by 1668 with the first Champagne house—Ruinart—opening in 1729. Well-known, modern-day producer Moët Chandon opened in 1743. Another famous producer, Veuve Cliquot, led by a female wine maker Madam Cliquot, invented the method of hand riddling sparkling wine bottles that is still used today. It wasn't until 1876 that brut Champagne—the dry style most commonly consumed today—became the important product for the region. Nearly 500 years after

Champagne was first introduced, the same basic processes are still used. Though these steps can be mechanized, some producers still do them by hand.

This traditional method, also called classic method or method Champenoise, is the method that Matthew uses when he makes his bubbly. The most important part of this technique is a second fermentation that takes place in the wine bottle. When carbon dioxide is released from the process of fermentation, the gas is trapped in the bottle, creating the

signature bubbles. (See Page 42)

Traditional Champagne yeasts are used, but Matthew innovates within this classic method with the grapes he grows. Unlike strict laws that require Champagne only be made from three certain grapes—chardonnay, pinot noir, and pinot munier—American rules are not as strict, so Matthew can make his wines from any grapes he wants. He does source riesling and other grapes from West Coast growers, but his specialty wines are produced from his estate-grown, hybrid grapes like frontenac and la crescent. He's also able to make any desired level of sweetness or any desired color of wine. His modern approach shows itself in his demi-sec (semi-sweet) sparklers made from moscato and pineapple and a rosé bubbly from frontenac noir estate grapes.

His innovation continues within the historic steps. Belle Joli will use a machine to do some of the riddling, the process to get the yeast in the neck of the bottle to freeze and be removed. This modernized step will be used for larger production wines so less labor will be needed and less time will be taken before the wines are ready. However, certain sparkling styles will still be riddled by hand, a very time-consuming process.

The time Matthew's sparkling wines are aged in bottle also mirrors the French practices, where wines are left on the yeast, called lees, while in the bottle for an extended period of time. This adds depth and dimension to the



flavor. Belle Joli's wines are also aged in the bottle after the yeast is removed. Estate wines bottle age three years, most others less than a year.

The bottle used for christening the *USS South Dakota* could age 10-15 years, just like the best Champagnes. Choi Jackson told of her recent opening of one of these bottles: "It had developed such creaminess to it. Beyond the light and crisp and fresh tastes. If you need something heavier or for a special occasion, go to the aged sparkling to get more flavor and richness."

Most of all, the Jacksons want people to know there are many ways to make sparkling wines, but they are not doing those other ways. "We wanted to stick with the old, traditional Champagne way. It tastes better. People need to understand it's not easy. It's labor intensive. It takes time and patience to make all of that happen. And then it [the wine] can be aged so many years."

Ultimately, Matthew and Choi want to invoke a modern, Western

version of what they felt in Champagne. "Sitting at a bar in Champagne with such a long history, we love to come to the region because of the feeling, the history. It is such a small area filled with farmers and growers who are putting their energy toward it," Choi reminisces. "Many producers who are so small that no one ever hears about, so to talk to the producers and winemakers and hear their passions was my favorite part of the time there."

The time and patience Matthew gives to every bottle he produces is the same time and patience that has been given to the most prestigious wines of the world for hundreds of years. His process is modern, yet rooted in tradition. He makes a product that reflects his style and his place, but it also reflects the history of a time and place before him. His passion for wine since he was a teenager shows in every bottle of sparkling wine he produces, every bottle that takes history and brings it into today's Black Hills wine world. <<

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# From Vine to Wine

## HOW WINE IS MADE

With Firehouse Wine Cellars' Adam Martinez



Making wine is a painstaking and time-consuming process that takes months or even years from start to finish. Learn how wine goes from grape to glass with Firehouse Wine Cellars' winemaker Adam Martinez.

**1. Harvesting:** Making wine, especially good wine, starts in the vineyard. Before the grapes are harvested, the vineyard manager and winemaker use several methods to measure acid and sugar in the grapes to determine when they are ready to be picked.



**2. Crushing:** When the vineyard manager and winemaker have decided the grapes are ready, the fruit is picked and brought to the winery. The grapes are crushed, de-stemmed, and turned into juice called must.



**3. Fermenting:** Depending on the grape and style of wine desired, there are many factors the winemaker uses to decide how the wine should be treated during fermentation. Yeast is added to the wine to eat sugars and turn them into alcohol. Once all the sugar, or as much sugar as the winemaker wants, is eaten by the yeast, the fermentation is stopped.

**4. Aging:** Most red wines (and some white wines) will be aged on oak until the wine-making team decides the flavor is perfect. This can take anywhere from a few months to nearly two years, depending on the wine.



**5. Clarifying:** White wines will be clarified, a process that removes any haziness or particles in the wine. White wines are also typically stabilized against hot and cold temperatures to keep solids from precipitating out of the wine.

**6. Bottling:** After aging for reds or clarification for whites, the wine is ready to be bottled. The proper glass is chosen, based on the style of wine. Then the wine is prepared by filtering and completing any other steps it needs to be protected as it ages in the bottle and waits for the lucky patron who gets to drink it.

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# How Sparkling Wines are Made

With Belle Joli's Matthew Jackson

**First Fermentation:** A base still wine with low sugar, high acid, and no carbonation is made. This can be blended with wine from past years.

**Second Fermentation:** After the first fermentation, the wine is bottled and a "liqueur de tirage" is added to the bottle. This sugar and yeast blend creates a second fermentation in the bottle. Carbon dioxide is produced during this fermentation,

and since the carbon dioxide can't escape the bottle, it is absorbed in the form of bubbles.

**Sur Lei/Lees Treatment:** The yeast from the second fermentation dies in the bottle and then the yeast (known as lees) is left in the bottle for a certain amount of time. This aging causes the smell and taste of yeast or bread dough in the wine.

**Riddling:** Bottles are incrementally turned

upside down and must be constantly rotated for the yeast to settle in the neck of the bottle. This can be done by hand or by machine.

**Disgorgement:** When the yeast is completely settled in the neck of the bottle, the neck is put in freezing brine to freeze the yeast, and the bottle is turned upright. The frozen yeast is popped from the neck of the bottle; sometimes some wine will escape with it.

**Dosage:** Next, a small amount of wine and sugar, called "liqueur d'expedition," is added to fill the bottle due to wine lost during disgorgement. This sweetness level of the dosage determines the dryness of the end product. (See Page 43)

**Corking:** Lastly, the final cork and cork cage are put on the bottle, and the long process of producing a sparkling wine is complete.

## LEVELS OF



# Sweetness

**Brut Nature** is bone dry: No sugar added with the dosage.

**Extra Brut** is very dry: Only a minimum amount of sweetness.

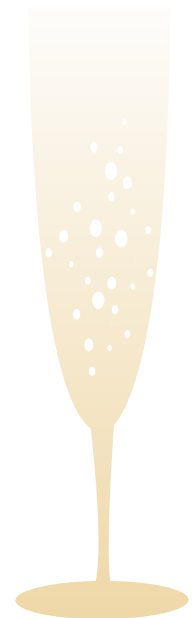
**Brut** is dry: The most popular type of sparkling in the U.S.

**Extra Dry** or **Extra Sec** actually is off-dry: Has some sweetness—second most popular.

**Sec** is semi-sweet: More sweetness.

**Demi-sec** is sweet: Sugar added in the dosage.

**Doux**—very sweet: Large concentration of sugar—considered a dessert wine.



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# THE FIVE S's OF Wine Tasting

**SIGHT:** First look down in the wine to see if it is acceptable to drink. Then look for color, color intensity, and color shade. Turn wine glass at a forty-five degree angle to look for the same color characteristics and a watery edge.

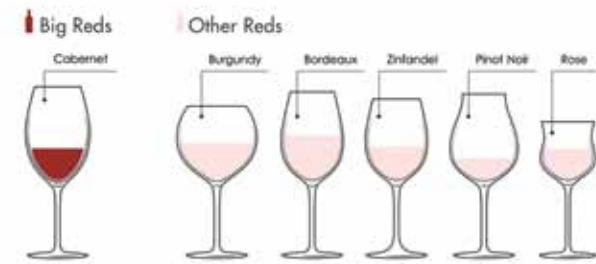
**SWIRL:** Swirl wine in the glass to aerate the wine; this addition of more oxygen releases the smells and flavors of the wine. Swirl vigorously but not violently, between five to eight seconds.

**SMELL:** Really inhale the fragrances in the wine, starting at the lower rim of the mouth of the glass, going to the top of the mouth of the glass. The lower is the aroma (often shows more characteristics of the grapes and how they were grown); the top

is the bouquet (often shows more characteristics of the wine-making process). Together they make up the "nose" of the wine. Many different smells can be identified.

**SIP:** Take a large enough drink to cover the inside of the mouth, coating all taste buds to get the full flavors of the wine. Some experts even swish the wine around in their mouths or "chew" it. Many different flavors can be identified.

**SAVOR:** Even when the wine has been swallowed, taste remains. This is called the finish, and it can be completely different from the initial perception in the mouth. A pleasant and long-lasting finish is a sign of a good wine!



## TYPES OF WINE GLASSES



## SIPPING TEMPERATURES

A guideline is the lighter the body of the wine, the colder the serving temperature. Cellar temperature is 52-57°F; room temperature hovers near 70°F. Never serve a wine at room temperature!

Sparklings—brrr: 45-50°F  
Rosés and desserts—still chilly: 47-55°F  
Whites—light-bodied: 47-55°F  
Whites—full-bodied: 55-60°F

Reds—light-bodied: 50-56°F  
Reds—medium-bodied: 55-62°F  
Reds—full-bodied: 60-65°F

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**AROMA AND TASTE WORDS FOR SIPPING WINE**

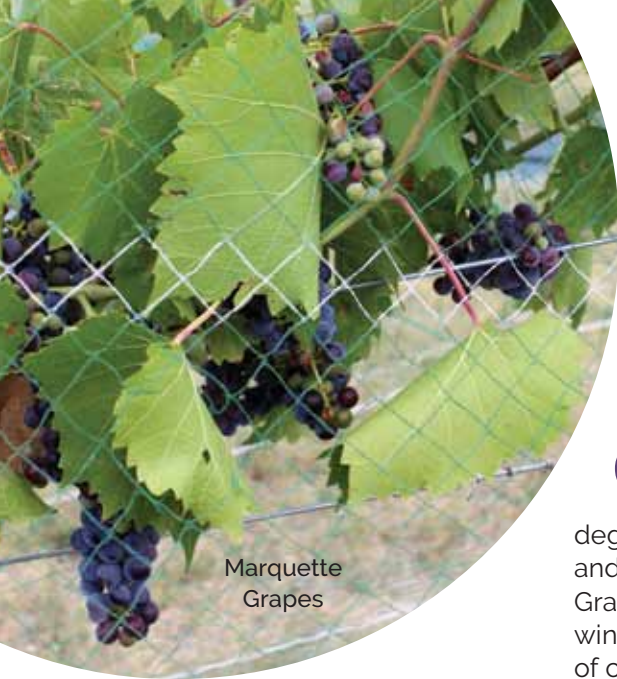
Many people use certain terms to first describe the smell of a wine, which constitutes the aroma and bouquet of a wine—what people often refer to as the nose. Then there are terms to describe the actual taste of the wine, from the time the wine hits the tip of the tongue to the end of the finish. These terms will help describe wine while helping to understand others' descriptions of wine, as well.

**Fruit:** apple, berry, mixed berry, strawberry, raspberry, cherry, citrus, lemon, lime, orange, grapefruit, tropical fruit, pineapple, melon, stone fruit, peach, pear, jammy/jam-like, baked, overripe, prune, raisin, candy

**Earth:** earthy, loamy, herbaceous, green herb, sage, dill, bay leaf, leafy, mushroom, musty, grass

**Wood:** buttery, cedar, oaky, smoke, cinnamon, baking spices, nutty, spicy, vanilla, woody

**Other:** acidic, flabby, alcohol, astringent, balance, big, body, brilliant, crisp, floral/flowery, tart, sweet, supple, smooth, petrol, leather, dry, corked



Marquette Grapes

# Hybrid Grapes



## OF THE BLACK HILLS

### RED

**Marquette**—a grandson to the pinot noir grape, marquette was developed by the University of Minnesota. In addition to being able to withstand short growing seasons and harsh weather, marquette is also immune to mildew and rot. High in sugar with moderate acids and tannins, ruby-colored marquette produces wines with complex flavors of berries, cherry, pepper, and earth; it makes a lighter-bodied red similar to pinot noir.

**Frontenac Noir**—also developed by the University of Minnesota, frontenac can weather winter temperatures of up to thirty-three

degrees below zero! The grapes and vines are very disease resistant. Grapes produce garnet-colored wines with flavors and aromas of cherry, currant, and other red fruits. The grape can make sweet to dry wines and rosés.

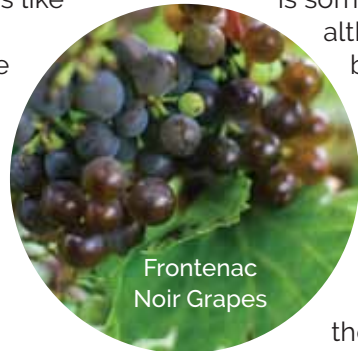
**Baco Noir**—a hybrid grape that has been used in areas like New York State since the 1950s, it is capable of producing wines that have the ability to age. Common aromas and tastes are cherry, plum, raisin, and spice. It is often blended with other grapes, either hybrid or *Vitis vinifera*.

**Corot Noir**—released in 2006, corot noir was created by Cornell University and the New York State Agriculture Department; this grape

produces wines almost inky black in color. Not as cold hardy as some other hybrids, it makes wines with low acid and cherry and mixed berry characteristics; it is also often blended with other grapes.

**St. Croix**—a sweet, red grape with dark, blue-colored berries, St. Croix is somewhat winter hardy, although the roots survive better if insulated with snow; it is also disease- and mildew-resistant. St. Croix is often used to make sweet red wines or blended with other grapes.

**Petite Pearl**—one of the newest hybrid grapes, petite pearl was released in 2010 from the University of Minnesota. Cold-hardy to over thirty degrees below zero, petite pearl grapes make dark garnet



Frontenac Noir Grapes

wines with low acid and ripe fruit flavors. Since the grape is so new, wines made from it are still being developed, but the grape has great potential for amazing wines.

### WHITE

**La Crescent**—released in 2001, these vines are very cold-hardy—to thirty-six degrees below zero! Somewhat disease resistant, the wines produced generally have apricot and peach characteristics with high acid content. Often compared to riesling, these grapes can be made into sweet wines, dessert wines, or sparkling wines.

**Frontenac Gris**—literally translated to “gray” frontenac, this grape has good sugar content with balanced acid. Because of this, it can make wines of many sweetness levels, from off-dry to dessert. Also compared to a riesling, frontenac gris has peach, apricot, and tropical fruit smells and flavors.

**Brianna**—created by well-known grape breeder Elmer Swenson, who also invented the Edelweiss grape, this green-gold berry harvests in September with good acid and sugar content. Wines from brianna show characteristics of pineapple and tropical fruits and are often sold as single varietal wines.



Petite Pearl Grapes

### Edelweiss—

also conceived by Elmer Swenson, this grape has been around since 1978. Not only is this grape disease-resistant, but it ripens early to produce a sweet grape that can also be used for juices and jellies. Because of this sweetness, edelweiss makes semi-sweet wines, sweet wines, or dessert wines.

**Seyval Blanc**—is a crisp, fruity, citrus-flavored grape with mineral components, making some compare its wines to Chablis-styled wines made from the chardonnay grape. The grape ripens early, and wines from it can withstand some oak aging. This is a popular grape grown in New York State.

**Vidal Blanc**—also grown in New York State, vidal blanc is related to



Brianna Grapes

the ugni blanc grape—the fruit used to make France’s famous Cognac. These vines grow grapes with high acid and sugar content, giving the wines the ability to have sweetness levels anywhere from off-dry to dessert. Its romas and flavors are floral, grapefruit, and pineapple. <<

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# PERFECT PAIRINGS

## Chocolate & Wine

**W**ine is one of the finest beverages in the world. It, then, naturally belongs with one of the finest delicacies in the world—chocolate. Pair these special products and an absolutely amazing sensory perception is in the making.



Fine chocolate is made all over the Black Hills; look for Mostly Chocolates in Rapid City, Chubby Chipmunk in Rapid City and Deadwood, Turtle Town in Hill City, and Custer Candy Company in Custer. Make these delicious desserts even better with a fine glass of wine made in the Black Hills, or experiment with a bottle from somewhere outside the region. Neither will disappoint.

**Dark chocolate with cabernet sauvignon**—Pairing dark chocolate

with dry, red wines like cabernet sauvignon brings out the flavorful bitterness for which dark chocolate is known. This duo will also bring out the richness of the chocolate and the fruit elements of the wine. Red wines made from the zinfandel grape will also pair well with dark chocolates.

**White chocolate with dessert/sweet wines**—This sweet-on-sweet pairing is a delicacy on all levels. The white chocolate complements the honey flavors often found in sweet wines made from the moscato grape and other fruits. The wine should always be as sweet or sweeter than the chocolate, or the wine might seem more bitter than it really is.

**Mint chocolate with pinot noir**—Many wines made from the pinot noir grape have minty and eucalyptus characteristics. These qualities pair well with and accentuate mint chocolate, making for a cool, minty treat.

**Spicy chocolate with pinot noir**—Chocolate that has spice also pairs well

with pinot noir. Tannin, or astringency, in wine can accentuate the heat of spicy foods, even chocolate. Pinot noir is known for having mellow tannins, so these wines will not make the chocolate seem even hotter on the palate.

**Milk chocolate with nuts and coconut with syrah**—Chocolate with nuts and coconut pairs with wines made from the syrah grape. This combination accents the fruitiness of the syrah wine while bringing out the nuttiness of both the chocolate and the wine.

**White chocolate crème brulee or cheesecake with chardonnay**—The creaminess of the white chocolate with these other delicious flavors complements the buttery flavor of the chardonnay grape while bringing out the fruit qualities of the wine as well. White chocolate with cinnamon will also pair well with rich, chardonnay wines.

*Of course, no wine is needed to enjoy wonderful chocolate creations. Life is uncertain, so eat dessert first ... and sip a beautiful glass of wine at the same time.*

# Wine terms

## FOR SIPPING WINES

**Acidity:** acid content in wine

**Blend:** wines made from multiple grapes; many wines are blends

**Body:** the viscosity or thickness of the wine

**Dessert wine:** can be dry or sweet—dry has higher alcohol; sweet has higher alcohol and higher sugar. Dessert wines are fortified or late harvest—fortified wines have a neutral grape spirit added; late harvest wines are made from grapes that were left to ripen on the vine extra time to increase sugar content

**Fruit forward/fruity:** the fruit flavor of wine, not actual sugar content

**Finish:** the taste that is left in the mouth after the wine has been swallowed

**Hybrid:** a species of grape made by biologically crossing two different species of grapes; hybrids have different characteristics than *Vitis vinifera* grapes, such as the ability to grow in cold climates with shorter growing seasons

**Informing grape:** highest percentage of grape on the label

**Mead:** a beverage made from fermenting honey; also called honey wine

**New World:** North America, South America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa

**Old World:** Europe, central Asia, northern Africa

**Sommelier:** wine steward; a trained and knowledgeable wine professional who often works in a fine restaurant and specializes in wine and food pairing

**Sparkling wine:** has effervescence, usually three atmospheres of pressure or higher

**Still wine:** wine with less than four percent residual sugar; often called table wine

**Sweetness:** actual sugar content

**Tannins:** the "dryness" of wine; astringency

**Terroir:** total growing environment of grapes—climate, sunshine, ground water, aspect, and soil

**Varietal:** type of wine in the bottle; referred to as varietal after produced into wine

**Variety:** type of grape that will make wine; referred to as variety as a grape

**Vitis vinifera:** a species of grapes native to the Mediterranean and to central Europe; the grapes used to make the majority of commercial wines, like chardonnay and cabernet sauvignon

**Vitis riparia:** the species of grape native to the United States



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# PERFECT PAIRINGS

## Cheese & Wine

Pairing wine with cheese is an absolutely necessary and natural treat. One historic technique for pairing is to pair wines from a specific region to the cheese produced in that region. These are often easy ways to enjoy both products.

However, wines from all over the world complement cheeses made in any location, including wines and cheeses found in South Dakota.



**Manchego with tempranillo**—Manchego, an aged sheep's milk cheese made in Spain, is a buttery and flavorful cheese. Wines from the tempranillo grape show great fruit flavor and smooth tannins. The two pair together because their strong flavors complement each other while the fruitiness and nuttiness contrast with each other.

**Herbed and aged cheeses with grenache**—Cheeses with herbs added to the rind or the body of the cheese have an additional flavor component with which to pair. Wines made from grenache tend to be well-rounded with smooth tannins and black fruits. These elements pair well with rosemary, dill, oregano, basil, and other savory flavors.

**Aged goat's milk cheeses and syrah**—Goat's milk adds an earthy and barnyard-like characteristic to cheese, especially if these cheeses are aged and semi-firm. The slightly tangy and salty flavor needs a robust wine from the syrah, or similar, grape. This can be a delicious pairing due to the wine's red fruit and spice flavors.

**Aged, sharp cheddars with pinot noir**—Sharp, aged cheddars are strong and pungent with a smooth mouth feel. They pair well with the acidic fruitiness of the pinot noir grape. Oregon and Sonoma County pinot noirs, with their bright fruit characters, will be a great contrast pairing for robust cheddar cheese.

**Blue cheese with sweet wines**—Blue cheese is so pungent and so flavorful that it makes pairing difficult for some palates. Use the sweetness of a dessert wine or a sweet, fruit wine to temper what some may see as blue's harsh flavor profile. The contrast mellows the sweetness of the wine and softens the bold flavor of the cheese.

**Brie and Camembert cheeses with chardonnay**—These soft cheeses have a creamy, buttery texture. Chardonnay's buttery richness mirrors this texture and brings out the earthiness of both Brie and Camembert. These styled cheeses also accentuate the fruit qualities of the chardonnay grape.

All over the Black Hills, amazing cheeses can be purchased. Each winery has a cheese plate option, and most have an assortment of cheeses available for purchase. Wine, specialty shops, and grocery stores across the region also have a wide variety of cheeses from around the globe. Stop, shop, nibble, sip, and enjoy these great pairing opportunities.

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