

THE SPIRIT MAKERS OF LAKE COUNTRY

Local breweries and winery keep the tradition alive

With recognizable names such as Pabst and Watertown Plank Road, Lake Country is filled with the history of booze makers. There are places in the area that are keeping that tradition alive. Winemaker Kyle Gomon summed it up the best for his fellow Lake Country booze makers: "It started as a hobby, turned obsession, turned profession."

And things really haven't changed for these guys since the days of homebrew kits. They are still essentially one-man shows with meticulous devotion in crafting small batches of great-tasting, high-quality libations. They wouldn't have it any other way. So visit these places, and have a taste that is truly unique to Lake Country. Cheers!

DELAFIELD BREWHAUS

For brewmaster John Harrison, designing the Delafield Brewhaus around the brewing system was tantamount to centering a ballpark on home plate. "I designed my brewing system first, and then everything was designed around that," he says.

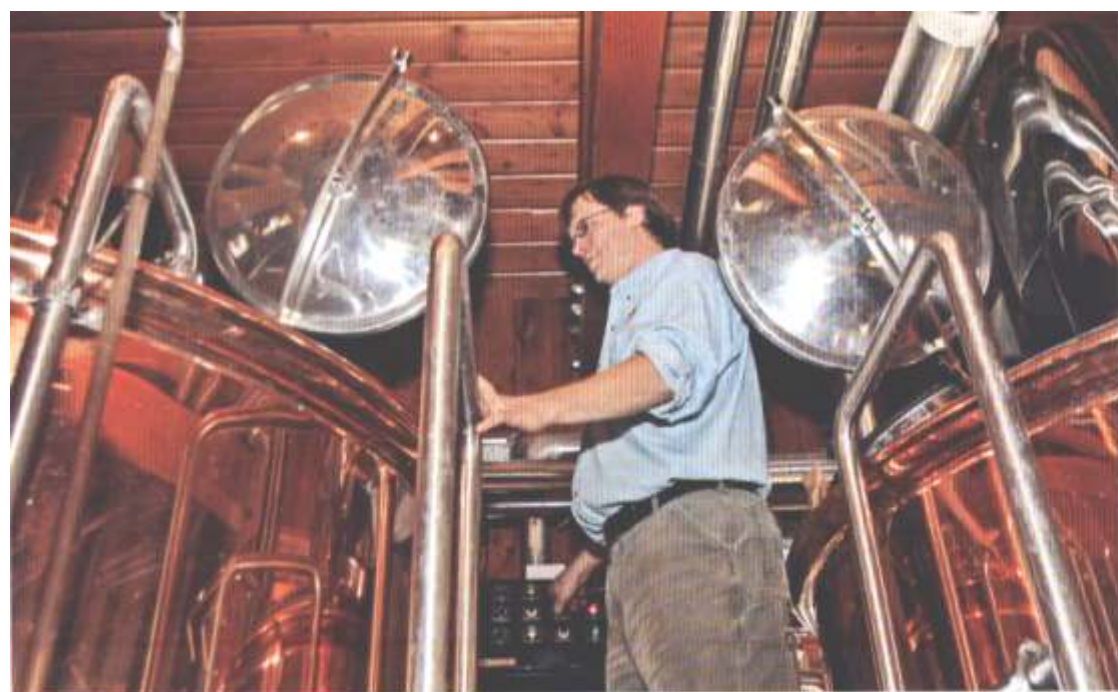
In fact, it is Harrison's towering amalgamation of stainless-steel tanks and pipes that patrons first see upon walking through the front doors. "I didn't want it like some other brewpubs when you ask where they brew, and they say, 'Well, you go down the hall, past the kitchen, and look through the little window, and there is the brewery,'" Harrison says. "It needed to be out in front. I wanted people to

by Andy Schatschneider | photography by Gregg Mautz





Above: Bobbi Gomon pours a glass of Mason Creek Winery's De la Flirt at the Delafield winery's gift shop. **Left:** Brewmaster John Harrison checks the scent of a holiday brew aged in oak whiskey barrels at the Delafield Brewhaus.



The beer at Water Street Brewery doesn't travel far – about 50 feet from the serving tanks to the taps. Brewmaster George Bluvas III inspects the inside of the restaurant's copper tanks.

know what they were going to get.”

What patrons get are Harrison's fresh ales and lagers made from his own recipes. Since the Delafield Brewhaus on Hillside Drive opened in 1999, more than 60 of Harrison's recipes for beer have been served. And, with limitless variations in accenting the tastes of different styles of beer from around the world, Harrison says he has just begun. “A lot of people aren't aware of the different styles out there,” he says. “For many, it is only American lager or American lager light: Miller or Miller Lite. That's all.”

The brewhaus' nine taps, Harrison says, have a range of light-, medium- and full-bodied beers brewed in a more European style, with less carbonation and served at appropriate temperatures. “Good beer shouldn't be served ice cold; you can't taste it,” he says. “We want you to taste our beer, to taste the ingredients.”

Harrison's ingredients, such as his hops and malt, can be homegrown or ordered from around the world, from as far away as Great Britain and Czechoslovakia. He also regularly

travels to different countries to better understand their styles. “I go and see what the real McCoy tastes like,” he says.

His beer has received international recognition, including the gold medal at the 2000 World Beer Cup for his Millennium Tripel, a heavily malted Belgian-style beer. “I even beat out the Belgians on that one,” he says.

The Delafield Brewhaus lunch crowd can regularly watch Harrison brewing his creations. “I am more than happy to answer any questions and share my knowledge about beer,” he says. However, Harrison chuckles at the most frequently asked question. “They ask me, ‘Do you make the beer here?’” he says. “So it is nice to have people see me actually in the brewing process.”

He generally brews two different batches of beer a week, and it all ends up in cold serving tanks with lines leading directly to the bar taps. “It can't get any fresher than that,” he says.

Eric Knutson, general manager for the Delafield Brewhaus, says Harrison continually surprises him with every

new brew. “John is the mad brewing scientist,” Knutson says. “We give him the freedom to create.”

Knutson and Harrison say they enjoy bringing different styles of beer to Lake Country, and will continue brewing as many as they are capable of. “So many ideas, not enough tanks,” Knutson adds.

Harrison sighs. “Yeah, so many beers,” he says, “and only one lifetime.”

MASON CREEK WINERY

Kyle and Bobbi Gomon provide a respite for the wine drinkers in Lake Country. “People just tend to drink beer in the summer,” Kyle says. “But in the fall, as the weather changes, people start moving toward wine. People go out looking at the fall colors, and come in to taste some of ours.”

Kyle, who had been making wine as a hobby for about 10 years, first started selling bottles in 2000 from a sun-room that he converted into a winery at their home. “We kept quickly selling out what we had,” he says. “We were bursting at the seams, so we thought we would go full board with it.”

Four years ago, they opened Mason