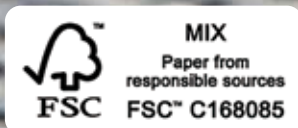


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Beer Wine & Spirits

**SUMMER STYLES
THE LONG AND WINDING
ROAD INLAND
IN THE SUMMERTIME**

**MAINLY SUMMER -
MASTER YOUR
RELAXING**



FREE

Locally Owned And
Published In Maine

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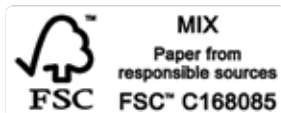
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Photo by Dave Bolton

Mainely Summer

Master Your Relaxing

Written by Jeff Cutler



For about 14 months I've been struggling to install a weather station. This isn't an indictment of how hard it is to **install a weather station**. Hardly. The weather station is fine and comes with all the necessary info and equipment to install it.

The stumbling block in the install process is two-fold.

First, my skill is not. By that, I mean I don't have any skill when it comes to improving a home; fixing a car; operating anything larger than a bottle opener. It's hardly believable that I've made it this far without generic fix-it knowledge.

Lucky for me, it's Summer. And the only three things I need to do in the Summer are:

Make sure there's beer in the fridge (or in the cooler if we are not in the house); Pay attention to the weather so we can enjoy the parts of Maine we don't visit in the cold; and Create a plan because Summer is shorter, faster, and more robust than you can imagine.

That last statement might not be true for you, but every year

I find that I've forgotten to get spiders out of my cooler; my **L.L. Bean foul weather gear** is in a bucket at the back of the garage where I left it in October; and it turns out that I have no presentable Summer outfits.

Yes, this is Maine and we take our gear and beer seriously. That said, we're not over-the-top about it...or about anything. It's a practical Maine mindset. If you can't fix something to your liking, you just live with it.

I think **Maine is where the phrase "quit yer complainin"** came from. Come to think about it, I believe a bartender named Jess or Savannah originally told me that. They said if I'm gonna be whining, I should do it in the parking lot and then come back when I'm done.

Essentially, that's the Maine method. Some people say that they can't complain because no-one would listen. That's partly true, it's not that no-one would listen, it's just that when you're done complaining, they'll be there with a story to top yours.

Generally, you're better off just smiling and having a good time. It's Summer after all.



And it's not the type of Maine Summer that Teagan Wright complains about, with hot dog mutiny; tourists; deer flies; or traffic...it's WAY BETTER. Let's take a look at why enjoying beer, wine and spirits is more fun in the Summer in Maine.

People

Hibernation is over and people are emerging to do all the fun Summer things. Firepits on back decks, tubing in the river, and 700 other recreational pursuits that are more fun with people.

I'm talking about the people you want to be with, the people you want to drink with, the people you want to laugh and cry with. Friends, family, and people who are about to become friends always make Summer better. One of the best things about having people around is that it's never boring. Especially when you're looking for the next **summer adventure**.

If you think about it, there's no way you can come up something new and exciting to do every day. That's why people are so valuable. Find the right crew to hang with all summer and you'll never be bored.

The Land

The other thing about Maine in the Summer is that the state offers so many options for recreation that something will

be accessible and exciting for everyone. From state parks to conservation land to rivers to lakes and mountains...Maine is naturally fun.

Regardless of your zip code, I guarantee there's something nearby to ignite your imagination and get you excited about the season. In Maine, you can go from the mountain peaks to Peaks Island in an afternoon. Biking to bass fishing in an hour. Swimming to swigging brews at a campfire in minutes.

It's not the lack of things to do that causes so much consternation during the Summer in Maine...it's probably that there are too many options. Just name an outdoor pursuit and there's a group of people so focused on it you'd be astounded.

Get Active

Jump on a bike, in a **kayak, on a four-wheeler**. Take to the trail, the water, the woods. Here in Maine, the options are almost limitless. Perhaps the biggest two challenges is who to invite when you're planning a cool excursion. And how to keep the drinks cold.

I won't lie, I love coolers. I'm not sure why, but I have yet to **actually throw out a cooler**. In my life. Other people have pared down my cooler collection with yard sales and irrational fits, but



Photo via Mast Landing Brewing company

when it's been up to me, I have kept every cooler. And the reason is clear...you can never have enough ice.

Right, ice. You can never have enough ice for any trip. Ice turns to water which then turns into a soup of beer bottle labels and wet potato chips (tell Randy not to put snacks in the cooler - it's for beer). If you're still following, a cooler helps alleviate the ice issue. Ice stays in its ice form and makes all your **beer taste delicious**.

Weather Report

If you've been paying attention, we're now entering month 15 of no weather station. That's going to be crossed off my list this week, right after this column and after I test out the new smashburger place down the street.

The **final facet of enjoying Summer in Maine** with superior beverages, is knowing the weather. No just if it's going to rain. Nope. You've got to understand how the tides could affect the number of black flies or greenheads. You've got to predict where the sun is so when you park at the beach you don't **melt your face off** when you return to the car.

The items I carry for Summer weather are pretty inexpensive, and they have great functionality. First - duh - a quality cooler. Keeps food and drinks **fine in all weather**. Next up, a light

wardrobe with multiple layers.

Don't complain that it's 75-degrees out and you have **too much gear** to carry. Do appreciate that if you were in Rangely in May of this year, you would still be frozen. In addition to keeping you comfortable - in both warm and cold conditions - layers allow you to prepare for everything.

An **ideal layering setup** for me is a base of underwear, shorts, socks and a wicking T-shirt. Then, depending on forecast, I might add a long-sleeve shirt. Next up are wind-resistant pants, hiking boots, a pullover with a hood, then a jacket of Gore-Tex or other wicking material.

Once done, you're set to sit by the lake side or **go off into the woods** on an ATV. The best outfits for all weather are those that can be changed quickly, but still keep you warm.

Ultimately, there are three constants when it comes to enjoying the Summer in Maine. You, your companions (whether they be family and friends or a **complete stranger from Iceland** you met online), and your adventure.

Once you've got those things lined up, it's up to you. I'd advise you to smile, because drinking culture in **Maine in the Summer is off-the-hook**. Enjoy! Talk to you next issue 🍷



Summer Styles

Jonathan Strieff



Prior to the development of commercial refrigeration and mass market distribution, seasonal beer styles actually reflected something significant about the season in which they were drunk. Be it the grain or hops harvest, or the availability of a unique seasonal ingredient, or the role that heat and humidity played on the brewing process itself, the factors determining seasonal beer styles once had much less to do with market demand and personal taste than regional agricultural economics.

I've endured plenty of hairy eyeballs, from bartenders and patrons alike, for ordering stouts and porters during the scorchingest days of August, but I like what I like. Besides, if I don't maintain the demand for dark beers, will they stay on tap?

Summer is meant for the outdoors, fresh air, and cartoon suns wearing sunglasses. Whatever style of beer pairs best with your personal hot weather pursuits is the right one to drink this time of year. That said, the "while supplies last," marketing around Sum-

mer specific beers seems to fall neatly into four or five distinct styles. Enjoy them now, enjoy them all year long. In the immortal words of the Coca-Cola Company, "Obey your Thirst."

Lagers and Pilsners

Most beer sold in the U.S. today is some kind of lager. Budweiser, Miller, Sam Adams, Heineken, all of the biggest players specialize in the lager trade. It is what Hank Hill calls, "beer that tastes like beer."

Besides already being ubiquitous, lagers offers many characteristics that make them perfectly refreshing on a hot summer day. The light, crisp, dry finish and low ABV make traditional lagers as much like mildly inebriating water bottles as anything else. Many breweries infuse their "Summer" lagers with citrus flavors or additional wheat in the grain profile as a unique selling point but, to me, the lagers blandness is one of its greatest qualities. A good lager is one you can drink a case





of before you've even started drinking.

Pilsners fit the same description, though often with a slightly hoppier bitterness and rich, golden color.

Witbier and Hefeweizens

Wheat based beers, like Belgian Whites and hefeweizens, really stand out as a summer offering. The spicy notes imparted by coriander seed and orange peel in the brewing and the low hoppiness create a bold flavor that makes a great compliment to campfires, outdoor concerts, and all the pleasures that come after the hottest parts of the day. The Allagash Brewing website is loaded with images of dogs in boats, couples at camp, and cans of Allagash paired with lobster rolls, if you find yourself seeking inspiration for how best to go about drinking one of these beers.

Saisons

Originally brewed to keep Belgian farmworkers hydrated and happy during long summer work days, Saison farmhouse ales vary widely between breweries based on the range of ingredients used in the mash. It's most distinct trait comes from the unique Belgian ale yeast strains that ferment at high temperatures and metabolize a wide range of available sugars. The resulting flavors are fruity, peppery, earthy, and floral. Saisons are highly carbonated, giving them a champagne-like quality, and can appear clear, orangish or

almost pink in the glass. Breweries, like Oxbow Brewing Company, experimenting with fermenting saisons using wild yeast are creating beers completely unique to the microclimate of the tasting room.

Shandies

When I was in middle school, my friends and I were certain to become millionaires if we could crack the code of mixing different sodas together to create a novel soft drink sensation that would sweep the nation. We invested serious time and effort into our experiments and, while my orange soda- root beer concoction never caught on, we may have contributed to the slowly growing popularity of shandies.

A shandy is a low-alcohol, low-imagination, low-enjoyment pseudo-cocktail made by not having enough clean glassware to drink your beer and lemonade side by side. If you've ever thought, "I wish I could make this lemonade taste worse," you may be a shandy person.

Shandies take everything enjoyable in beer and lemonade and negate them by combining the two. If, at some point this summer, you find yourself unable to choose between beer and lemonade, avoid falling into the shandy trap and, just think a little harder about it. Clearly, there are plenty of better things you could be drinking this summer. 🍷



The Long and Winding Road Inland:

A Summertime journey through the backroads of Maine

Written by Beverly Ann Soucy

For years, I believed the truest way to understand Maine was to follow its coastline, to trace the edges where land gives way to sea, where lighthouses punctuate the horizon and salt air settles into your skin, and where meals arrive on paper plates with little plastic bibs, beside working harbors, simple and perfect in their immediacy; longing for the smell of the ocean and toes in the sand. Yet over time, almost without realizing it, the Maine that stayed with me, the one that lingered long after the trip ended, was not the one framed by the ocean and the toes in sand, but the one found by simply turning inland, where the roads are winding and narrow, where the pace of life moves slower, and the adventure begins to unfold in quieter, more unexpected ways.

It is a Maine of back roads and lake towns, of roadside stands that appear like small acts of faith, of farmers markets that gather at first light and dissolve again by midday, of fresh baked pies cooling on wooden counters and ice cream cones eaten slowly beside rivers that move without urgency. It is here, somewhere between a conversation with a home baker who has been shaping dough before dawn and a picnic assembled from whatever the day has offered, that our state reveals something far more intimate than any postcard could hold.

Each summer, that inland journey begins again, not with any kind of a fixed itinerary but with a kind of quiet agreement to follow where the wind takes you, with curiosity, and a promise to yourself to stop often, to let the day stretch rather than structure it. The essentials remain beautifully unchanged: a cooler in the back seat, a notebook within reach, binoculars for spotting the summer birds, a camera, sunscreen, bug spray, snacks, and the willingness to pull over whenever a hand-painted sign leans slightly toward the road, offering fresh strawberries, farm fresh eggs or fresh baked sourdough bread, or simply the word “FARMSTAND OPEN” written with care and intention.

Because in Maine, those small signs are rarely just about what they advertise; they are invitations into family lives, and livelihoods, into the very rhythms shaped by season and weather and repetition, into a kind of abundance that has nothing to do with excess and everything to do with timing.

And if you accept enough of those invitations, you begin to understand that food here is not separate from place, but inseparable from it. This is especially true when it comes to wine, where inland Maine quietly reshapes expectation, not by offering more, but by offering less, and in doing so, offering something better; with fewer distributors reaching into these rural pockets, selections tend to be modest and often unchanging, and yet that very limitation encourages a different kind of attention, one that favors wines that are approachable, versatile, and grounded enough to meet the food where it lives.

A Loire Valley Sauvignon Blanc, when you can find it, feels almost electric beside a tomato still warm from the sun, its acidity lifting the sweetness in a way that feels effortless rather than engineered, while a simple Provençal rosé, pale, dry, and unassuming, becomes exactly right, poured into a mismatched glass or a plastic cup, beside a lake, where the breeze carries the scent of pine and the meal is assembled from paper-wrapped findings gathered along the way; and for red, it is often the humble blends, Côtes du Rhône, perhaps, or an easy California table red, that prove most faithful companions, their soft tannins and quiet fruit allowing them to sit comfortably beside grilled meats, potato salad, or a slice of bread torn by hand.

Because the truth is, inland-Maine does not ask you to impress anyone at the table; it asks you only to be present. And presence begins, more often than not, at a roadside stand. These little creative stands appear without ceremony and fanfare, sometimes no more than a folding table beneath a canopy, sometimes a weathered shed with shelves lined in jars, sometimes nothing at all but a wooden box and a note written in careful script asking you to leave what you can in the box, and yet these small, often overlooked places carry an enormous weight, not just in what they offer, but in what they represent. For many families, these few fleeting months are everything.

The strawberries that ripen quickly in the days sunshine and must be sold just as fast, the corn stacked in green husks in an old wooden apple crate, still cool from morning harvest, the jars of pickled beets whose deep color seems to hold the entire season within it, the loaves of sourdough bread wrapped

in parchment and tied with twine, each one is part of a fragile economy built on trust and an effort grounded in love and precious time. To stop and make a purchase and for lingering even briefly, is to participate in that local economy that is steeped in long-standing traditions in a way that feels both simple and profoundly connected.

From each of these stops, a meal begins to take shape almost without intention: a loaf of fresh baked sourdough bread with a crust that crackles as you break it, a container of traditional potato salad bright with mustard and farm-fresh, boiled eggs and fresh picked dill, similar to traditional potato salad yet slightly different and based on family tradition, a jar of something pickled or preserved, a handful of berries eaten before they ever make it to the basket, and perhaps, if the day has been especially generous, a slice of pie from a roadside stand where the person who hands it to you does so with a quiet certainty that it will be the best gosh darn pie you ever have eaten because the berries were picked fresh last night from right over there in the field and the crust is homemade a grandmother's treasured recipe. It is in these moments that food sheds any pretense of performance and becomes something far more essential, something rooted and deeply satisfying in its simplicity.

And nowhere does that understanding deepen more fully than when the road begins to stretch eastward, toward the quiet reaches of Washington County, where the air carries a slightly different weight and the landscape opens in long, low gestures. It is here, in Machias, that a stop at Helen's Residence becomes something of a pilgrimage, though it never announces itself as such. The restaurant sits with a kind of steady and unpretentious dignity, rebuilt after a devastating fire that destroyed the original building, its reputation carried not by spectacle but by consistency and by decades of doing one thing exceptionally well. Inside, the rhythm and the sounds are still familiar, comforting in their predictability. But it is their blueberry pie that draws people across miles of winding road and up into rural Maine, a pie that feels less like dessert and more like a slice of heaven, each slice holding the essence of Maine's late summer in its deep blue filling, thick and generous with a handmade crust, balanced perfectly between sweetness and the quiet tartness that only true wild blueberries can offer. Served slightly warm or at room temperature, with or without a scoop of vanilla, it has a way of silencing conversation for just a moment, as though everyone at the table understands they are part of something worth pausing and staying silent for.

Just beyond, along the stretch of highway that crosses

RUSTIC TOMATO BRUSCHETTA WITH EVERYDAY RED WINE

Serves 6



Ingredients:

- 1 large sourdough loaf, sliced thick
- 4 ripe tomatoes, fresh off the vine, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup fresh basil, torn
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- Sea salt and cracked pepper
- Optional: chèvre or shaved parmesan

Instructions: Toast the bread until lightly charred, either over a grill or open flame, or a great cast iron pan, then combine the tomatoes, garlic, basil, olive oil, salt, and pepper in a bowl and allow the mixture to rest just long enough for the flavors to settle into one another before spooning it generously over the warm slices, finishing with cheese if you like, and served immediately with a soft, fruit-forward red blend, nothing complicated just something that meets the moment and affordability Effortless and decadent.

the bridge, summer reveals itself in another form entirely, an open-air flea market that appears almost organically, as though it has grown up alongside the road itself. Tables line the edge of the road, in a long, informal procession, antique tools, weathered books, glassware catching the light, handmade goods, and the quiet exchange of stories between those who sell and those who wander on through on the hunt for that secret treasure. There is no urgency here, no pressure to purchase, only the gentle unfolding of discovery, and the sense that something small and unexpected might find its way into your hands.

Turning back inland for a day of driving through small towns, the journey begins to gather new textures, leading westward through rural small towns that feel held gently in time. Farther along, the Wilton Farmers Market hums back to life quietly with early morning energy, tables laid out with handmade soaps that carry the scent of lavender and pine, baked goods still warm from ovens, and small-batch offerings that speak directly to the hands that made them. There is something deeply grounding about these markets, about the way they gather community through necessity and care, through the simple act of showing up week after week.

In Peru, at Houghton Farm, summer arrives in soft color and fragrance, rows of flowers gathered into what can only be described as French bouquets, loose and expressive, tied with a kind of casual elegance that feels entirely unforced. They are not overly arranged but instead carefully assembled with care, as though each bouquet were meant to echo the labor of love and the landscape itself; always picked fresh from the flower-field earlier in the day of your purchase.

Just outside of Rumford, on South Rumford Road, No View Farm offers another kind of abundance, one rooted entirely in the soil, a lifetime of knowledge and farming, where organic vegetables and seedlings are grown with an attentiveness that feels both deliberate and intuitive. Rows of hard-to-find greens in Hugelkultur beds, sunflowers and herbs, align with young organic seedlings, ready to go to their new homes, lining the long wooden tables in the greenhouse, to be carried home and replanted with the quiet understanding that what begins here will continue elsewhere, extending the season and bringing joy beyond its natural reach.

And closer still, in Bethel, the farmers market becomes a kind of weekly ritual, where fresh-grown vegetables, local grown fruits, mushrooms, and deeply satisfying sourdough bread, come together in a way that feels both essential and celebratory. It is here that the rhythm of the week reveals itself most clearly, where the land speaks through what is offered from its stewards, and where the act of choosing what to bring home becomes its own quiet pleasure as well as the excitement of making connections with the vendors for returning week after week until the season ends.

As you journey on back towards the River Valley, and connect with Route 17 and journey on up though, almost without announcement, you find yourself at the Height of Land, where the view opens wide and the air feels thinner, cleaner, and touched by magic. It is here looking out over the lake far below and feeling like you are touching the

sky, that a roadside picnic feels not only appropriate but necessary, where the act of stopping at the turn-off becomes part of the experience for picture taking and pausing life itself. Sandwiches of ham salad with chopped green peppers tucked into small finger rolls, cream cheese and olive spread on good old fashioned white bread, crackers and cheese and homemade cookies, with sparkling cider catching the light in small mismatched glasses, and a bag of old-fashioned barbecue potato chips passed easily between hands. Nothing elaborate, mostly sustenance harkening back to childhood memories.

The road carries on, as it always does, up toward Oquossoc, where a small market, Oquossoc Grocery, “OG” to the locals sits. If you didn’t happen to bring a picnic for the rest stop, this little gem of a store awaits with something as simple and as perfect as a good old-fashioned sandwich made on freshly baked bread right there at the counter. You know the kind; the one that still holds warmth at its center from the freshly sliced meat just out of the oven, layered with whatever the day has made available, lettuce, cheeses fresh tomato, all wrapped in white paper for carry out. They also offer an incredible wine and beer selection. Oh, and expect to stand in line, but don’t fret, it’s not for long, as they are fast paced and quite adept at moving those long lines to accommodate the tourist, sightseers, and travelers. The food, (but not the alcohol, as there are strict state rules about the consumption of alcohol in public places,) taken outside, to a picnic table either on the deck or beneath the open sky, where it becomes more than just a meal; it becomes a pause, after a breathless journey of beautiful mountainous landscape, and a moment of stillness before the road continues to rise gently through Eustis and into Carrabassett Valley, where the landscape begins to shift again, lifting into something more expansive with long stretches of complete wilderness and no humans in sight.

It is in these moments, too, when you have time to sit and reflect, that your wine selection finds its most natural expression, not as something curated to impress, but as something chosen to accompany. A chilled Vinho Verde from Portugal, lightly effervescent and bright, feels perfectly suited to the height and the breeze, while a dry Riesling from the Finger Lakes carries enough acidity to cut through the richness of picnic fare, its subtle sweetness echoing the ease of the afternoon. Even a simple Italian Pinot Grigio, which is one of this writer’s favorites for summertime spontaneity. It is clean and refreshing and always finds its place here, proving once again that context, more than pedigree, defines the experience.

As the day stretches, another kind of destination begins

TRADITIONAL MAINE POTATO SALAD

Serves 8



Ingredients:

- 3 pounds potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons yellow mustard
- 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 4 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- Salt and pepper and fresh dill

Instructions: Cook the potatoes until just tender, then fold them gently into a dressing of mayonnaise, mustard, vinegar, salt, and pepper along with the onion, celery, and eggs, allowing the salad to rest and chill until the flavors settle into something cohesive and familiar, the kind of dish that appears at every table yet always carries the signature of the person who made it.

to call: the ice cream stand, which in inland Maine is not an afterthought but a ritual, and a right of passage. It is a reason in itself to get in the car and go, tracing a path from one small window to another, from Saco's bustling roadside counters to the quieter reaches of Washington County, where blueberry pie and vanilla soft serve might share equal reverence. Each stand carries its own identity, its own small mythology, some known for towering sugar cones with soft serve swirled in two twisting flavors, that tilt dangerously in the summer heat, dripping down your hand, others for flavors that offer a variety of flavors with handmade, hard ice cream the likes of grapenut, butter pecan, pistachio and black raspberry. What unites them is not just the ice cream itself, but the joy they create, and the way they gather people into a single, fleeting moment of sweet goodness before sending them back out into the long, slow afternoon.

Farther north, along stretches of highway where the forest opens just enough to make room for a passing vehicle, roadside markets appear again, as if by magic out of nowhere, as an extension of the land itself. Tables lined with cucumbers and fresh picked carrots and fluffy carrot greens still dusted in soil, zucchini that seem impossibly large, jars of local honey catching the light, and always someone nearby willing to tell you where it came from, how it was grown, and why this particular week matters more than the last.

And then, occasionally, you encounter something even quieter still, if you are meandering through Somerset county; an Amish stand in Norridgewock, set back just enough from the road that you might miss if you were not looking closely, where the offerings are spare but exacting: dense loaves of bread, hand-rolled butter, paper bags filled with new potatoes,

SUMMER BARBECUE SAUCE



Ingredients:

- 1 cup ketchup
- 1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons molasses
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- A splash of maple syrup
- A pinch of cinnamon
- And just a hint of bourbon
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- Salt and pepper

Instructions: Simmer all ingredients together slowly until thickened, allowing the sweetness and acidity to balance into something rich and adaptable, a sauce that belongs as much to the moment as to the food it accompanies, whether brushed over grilled meat or served alongside whatever the day has brought.



jars of preserves thick with fruit, dried herbs the likes of dill, oregano, and thyme, and baked goods that feel as though they belong to another time entirely, their precision speaking not of trend but of tradition, their presence a gentle reminder that not all food needs to evolve to remain relevant.

And if you are still with me on this summer journey, a perfect end to the day is for creating a slow easy evening filled entirely with the day's offerings. By late afternoon, the day inevitably begins to gather itself, the light shifting almost imperceptibly at first, then more decisively, casting everything in that unmistakable gold and orange hue that belongs only to summertime here in New England. The sounds of the peepers and the hum of the day enter and somewhere, a grill is lit, the scent of smoke and wood chips thread through the air, as conversation slows, the wine is opened, the beer is cracked, and the evening meal takes on a different shape. One built not from movement but from staying in place where the conversation is easy for remembering the days journey and the company? Unmatched.

This is where the wines shift slightly, too, where a chilled rosé might give way to something with a bit more depth, a

light-bodied Pinot Noir from Oregon, perhaps, or a Beaujolais if it has found its way onto a local shelf, wines that remain bright enough for summer yet substantial enough to meet the smoky, sweet edge of barbecue without losing themselves entirely. Or if you are like me that old vine Zinfandel is calling, as you get comfortable by the fire pit.

As the evening settles in, and as the roadside stands come to close and the ice cream windows darken and the last of the light slips quietly behind the trees, what remains is not simply the memory of what was eaten or drunk, but the feeling of having moved through a landscape in a way that allowed it to offer up a slow easy day, free from life's day-to-day stress, without any kind of rush or expectation.

Because summertime, driving on through inland Maine, does not announce itself like the coastal areas do. It is a slow-moving story filed with dust and bugs, and unexpected adventure, that waits patiently to be discovered. And if you are willing to meet it there, on its roads, at its roadside tables and farm stands, and off-the-beaten path farms; within its brief and beautiful season, those inland roads offer something rather magical and sweet that us locals endure and wait



patiently all winter for; something that cannot be packaged or replicated, something that lives in your memories and in the space between a simple meal and the place it came from.

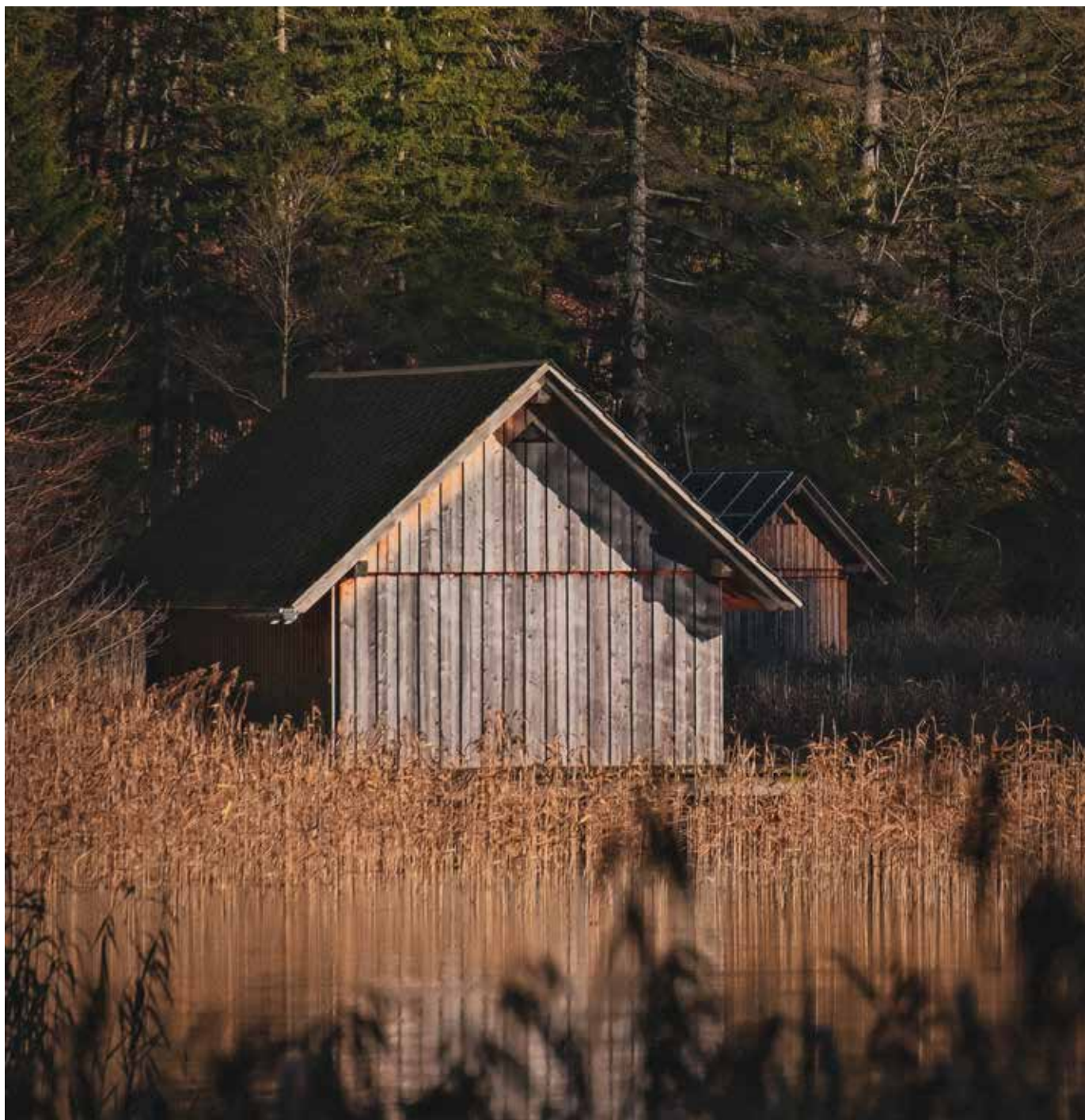
Long after summer fades, and reality sets back in, it is not the grand meals that return to you with the unexpected catch of a smell, but the small, unexpected ones. That slice of perfect blueberry or strawberry rhubarb pie, eaten beside your car on a paper plate with a plastic fork or your fingers, sans fork, the fresh baked sourdough bread torn open at a picnic table, eaten with a hunk of homemade cheese, and the wine poured without ceremony into whatever glass was at hand; the night sitting beside the fire after a filling dinner of barbecued ribs, baked potatoes with chunks of salted homemade butter, wrapped in foil, and fresh, grilled vegetables. Those are the real memories that stay with you.

Maine remains exactly as it was found: heartwarming and connected, deeply and unmistakably to our very roots and to those of our ancestors who remember the old ways, of growing their own food, tilling the soil, planting, harvesting, preserving, and stocking pantries for the long winter season ahead. The very act of tending to gardens was equal to tending

to your family, in those days so long ago when life appeared to be much simpler.

The last light of summer has a way of doing something to you. It softens the edges of every bumpy, backroad traveled and helps you to forget the mosquitoes that inevitably appear as the sun goes down. Every unexpected treasure stumbled upon, every adventure that unfolded exactly the way it was never planned is turned into a collage of memories tucked away for bringing back out and reliving as we anticipate the longer winter season in front of us. It is there, in the stillness of winter that we pass the time for making plans for the next year's adventure, when summer inevitably rolls around again.

Those old inland roads hold onto memories the way good quilts hold onto warmth, and where you carry them home without even trying. Tucked somewhere between the honey jars rolling around in the back seat and the dried wildflowers pressed flat against the dash. Summer doesn't end so much as she gathers herself slowly, gracefully, on the roads less traveled. Those memories and adventures collected like a beloved antique collection. They sit and soften, and hold their own stories, like they are letting out a long breath they have



been holding onto since the beginning of the summer season. Those jars of jam and honey, homemade preserves and pickles, coveted and tucked in the back seat for the long drive home, right along with the picnic blanket that smells like clover and grass. It is there that you are lulled into a moment of content the quiet hum of your car carrying you home past green fields and roadside stands, that have given everything they had to your summer vacation and somehow know it. Summer doesn't end so much as she leans back, sighs, and lets you hold her a

little while longer, on roads that never let you rush anything, even the ones home. You learned that here on the backroads, that the summer-season that we wait for all year long, should be savored. It is where time slows down to almost a standstill and every moment, every sound and every smell is a real treasure to be held onto until next year rolls around. There is something to be said for that old song: "Summertime" when the living is, indeed, easy. For this writer, it perfectly sums up summertime in Maine. 🍷

VISIT BREWERIES, GET REWARDED



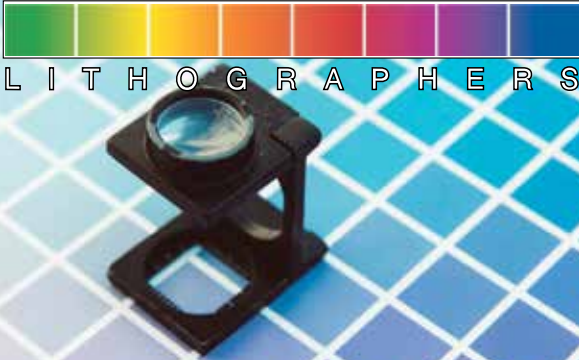
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In The Summertime...

It's warm weather, sweaty tourists, and cold craft beer

Written by Dave Bolton



Pop Quiz; What do Taylor Swift, Don Henley, Bryan Adams, Calvin Harris, Eddie Cochran, DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince, The Motels and Bananarama all have as a common denominator? If you are currently reading this issue of Craft, then the connection might be obvious but the simple answer is that all of these musical artists have released a song with the word “summer” in the title.

Anyone living in New England knows that the summer months are often a welcome break from the cooler temperatures that hang over the region for most of the year. And while the existence of climate change has made certain seasons less predictable than, say, 50 years ago, the fact that we get a guaranteed three or so months of longer days and warmer weather every year is always something to look forward to.

And if summer is finally here, then the recurring regional migration season - aka tourism - is also in full swing. The fact that the Pine Tree State is affectionately known as “Vacationland” is probably why the concept of hot fun in the summertime is both a critical contributor to the local economy and the reason to raise a

glass to the expected influx of tourists.

For most people, the summer season is not only worth waiting for but the perfect opportunity to sit back, relax and start the process of replenishing the body with free and natural Vitamin D more importantly, and especially for certain business sectors in Maine, it also means that there are suddenly hundreds of thousands of potential tourists packing their bags and getting their vacation vibe on. From a Mainer perspective, this is the moment when the state becomes not just a great place to live but also a must-go destination for first-time and repeat visitors.

According to data collected by the Maine Office of Tourism (MOOT) for Summer 2024, the state welcomed around 7.7 million visitors from May through to the end of August, with a significant proportion of those people reportedly coming from our neighbors in New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. And it is reasonable to assume that the majority (if not all) of these tourists were drawn to Maine by its beaches, outdoor culture, natural beauty and overall lifestyle. Which, spoiler alert, is almost certain to include craft beer.



We should note that tourists from outside of New England are not consciously avoiding the requirement to head north on the I-95 - far from it, if my sources at various breweries are correct about the different accents ordering beer in their taprooms are correct - but Maine has a well-earned reputation for being a “drive market.” In other words, there is an expectation that the majority of tourists will travel by car, which naturally favors anyone who lives “locally” and who doesn’t need to get on a plane.

A full 97 percent of visitors to Maine come from either the aforementioned neighboring states or Florida, with the 2024 data noting that there was direct spending of \$5.2 billion during the summer months, a recently published article on The County website said. If we drill down a little deeper into the demographics of the visitor profiles from last year generated by the data, the average age of a tourist is 41, 56 percent of whom are male, 90 percent are white or Caucasian, 48 percent are college or tech school graduates, 76 percent have a full-time job and 52 percent have beards.

OK, I made the last one up, however it’s hard to deny that this sounds very much like the sort of person who probably enjoys a craft beer or two while vacationing in Maine. Especially if they have come here as a brewery tourist.

If the data is correct (and I have literally no reason to suspect that the Maine Office of Tourism has plucked these numbers out of some magical lobster pot in their offices), then you don’t need to be a rocket scientist to realize that being prepared for the summer is a key part of any brewery’s business optimization strategy. Drinking a cold and refreshing beer is part and parcel of the summer, and Mainers are more than aware that the craft options available are often among the best on the East Coast, if not the entire country.

Seasonality, as I’ve discussed before, is part of craft beer’s enduring appeal. As we know, Maine is fortunate to have a robust brewing industry that taps (no pun intended) into what the end drinker wants to consume during the warmer months. Summer is essentially peak season across all New England states, and Mainers are used to both seasonal residents (people who relocate for three to four months) and the more casual visitor who may only be staying for a fortnight or less.

When you add into the mix the potential for day-trippers or weekend tourists, then the potential for making a lasting impression through the beer experience is extremely appealing. Let’s not forget that Maine is home to a number of recognizable craft beer brands, not only from a regional perspective but also

nationally and, increasingly, within the global beer community.

That is a USP which many states fail to match, even more so when you realize that the best-selling beer brand in Maine (according to a recent study by Coffeeness, cited by Q106.5 FM) is ... Miller. For context, this includes all varieties of Miller, including Miller Lite, Miller High Life - the “champagne of beers” - Miller Genuine Draft and Miller64. For context, it’s reportedly the best-selling beer nationwide.

It will be no surprise that I do not drink Miller. Maybe when I was in my early 20s and my beer palate was less refined, but Maine is just one of several states that has enthusiastically embraced this brand. Which is definitely a discussion for another day.

Leaving mass-produced and flavorless beer aside for the moment, let’s get back to why the craft beer industry in Maine and beyond should be laser-focused on the summer beer options.

As I mentioned before, craft beer sales during the summer months fall into the category of “peak season,” driven by increased outdoor consumption, major national holidays and, no surprises here, the regional migration patterns that are directly related to the tourist industry. The overall economic impact of the beer industry in Maine is substantial and contributes hundreds of millions of dollars annually to the state’s coffers - around \$743 million in 2024, according to the Brewers Association.

Every year, breweries, taprooms and bars are all beholden to the whims of the summer drinker. Industry data suggests that as much as 40 percent of total annual beer sales nationally are allocated to the four months between the start of May and the end of August, a statistic that is reportedly mirrored in New England. The region has a cultural identity that comes to the fore in the summer, especially for people that enjoy lazy days at the beach or chilling out on a pleasant patio (ideally overlooking as opposed to being in the water, but that might just be me).

Seasonal styles, as ever, should be the prevailing choice for end drinkers. If we gloss over the fact that IPAs remain the dominant force in the craft beer sector, then visitors are likely to seek out light, crisp beers (pilsners, lagers, Kolsches), fruited sours and Goses, wheat beers (Hefeweizens, wheat-based ales) and low ABV session beers that enhance the outdoor vibe of the summer vacation season.

And while the sheer number of breweries and styles can be overwhelming for the unprepared - the perfect answer to anyone who questions why The Maine Beer Trail needs to exist - the combination of recognizable brands and previously unknown

pleasures can tick all the seasonal boxes.

For example, the larger breweries (Allagash, Shipyard, Bissell Brothers, Maine Beer Company, all of whom appear in the top five of a Trip Adviser list) all offer an extensive beer menu at their taprooms, much of which is designed to highlight both their seasonal offerings and the flagship brews that made them famous. It goes without saying that these are likely to be the dominant options at bars and restaurants, but the curious drinker is guaranteed to find a plethora of regional “boutique” beers spread across the state. Publication deadlines (as ever) and word count limits me listing every single brewery that will have seasonal beers on tap, suffice it to say that you could limit yourself to summer styles and ignore a hazy IPA altogether.

For that reason alone, there is a consensus within the craft beer community that localization - both from a resident and visitor perspective - drives experimentation, and brewery tourism has been a part of the Maine experience for at least 15 years. A 2017 study by MOOT found that nine million tourists visited a brewery in that year and, while this data is slightly dated, it is unlikely that beer tourism numbers have dropped (2020 aside, naturally) in the eight years since the report was published.

This is all good news for Maine’s economy and ongoing reputation as Vacationland. However, tourism is a two-way street and the influx of non-residents might see some Mainers head down south. The stay-cation has become increasingly popular in recent years, but we should acknowledge that there aren’t other states who can provide a familiar (albeit vaguely different) craft beer experience.

And by familiar I mean one of two things ... either a regionally distributed Maine beer or, which is arguably more interesting to the end drinker, a brewery that uses Maine-sourced ingredients for their products.

If we take the first option - brand awareness - Mainers will always find Allagash, MBC, Shipyard, Bissell Brothers and Mast Landing on their travels. Granted it might just be MBC’s Lunch or BB’s Substance, but Allagash is almost ubiquitous in bars up and down the East Coast (Writer Note: I found all of them on a recent trip to New York, but I only drink local, so I went for NY-based breweries).

So, what about breweries that use Maine-centric ingredients like Blue Ox’s malt? Well, that takes some research and you probably need to spend some time surfing the ‘net. Which is arguably the antithesis of summer fun itself.

Hill Farmstead (Vermont), for instance, produces excellent

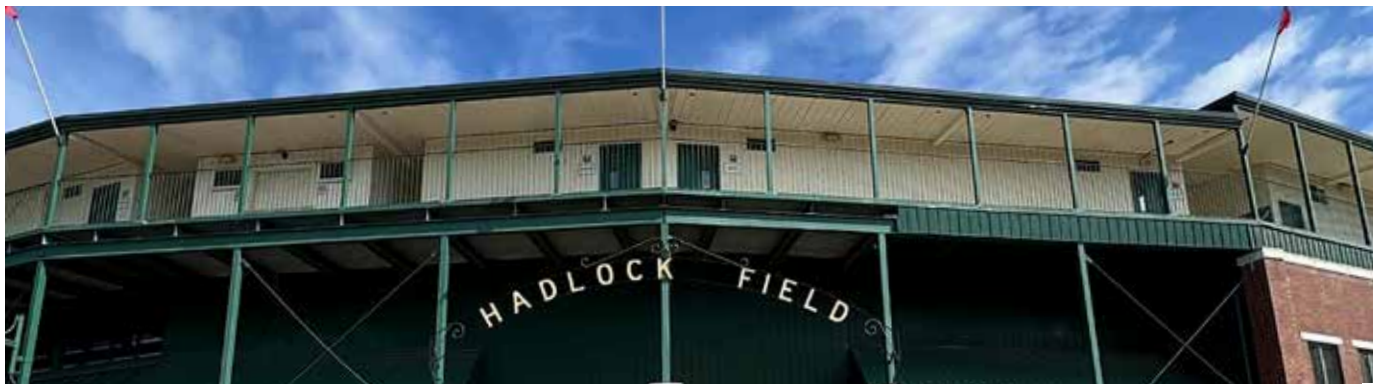
Photo by Dave Bolton



beers from Maine-produced malt that have only recently started to appear on draught lines out-of-state. Winter Hill, Lamplighter, Riverwalk and Trillium Brewing Company (all Massachusetts) have a significant roster of beers in their taprooms and other end drinking locations that are well worth checking out if you want to visit the Bay State. Lamplighter (based in Cambridge), for instance, have cited Blue Ox as a reason why its brewers are able to produce seasonal beers that have a consistent quality and drinkability, which is both gratifying to hear and a ringing endorsement for the reach of the craft beer industry in Maine.

There is, however, one problem with summer ... it doesn't last long enough. To quote the Fresh Prince, the chance to "put your car on a cruise and lay back 'cause this is summertime" is often limited by how quickly the summer months seem to flash by. When you think that we have been waiting patiently for these hot days and lazy nights to arrive, then that just seems cruel.

On the plus side, knowing that we have a few months before the tees and shorts get put away until next year is always a reason to celebrate. So, I will see you all at the beach ... I am the one sipping on an ice-cold lager and applying sunblock to my entire body. 🌞





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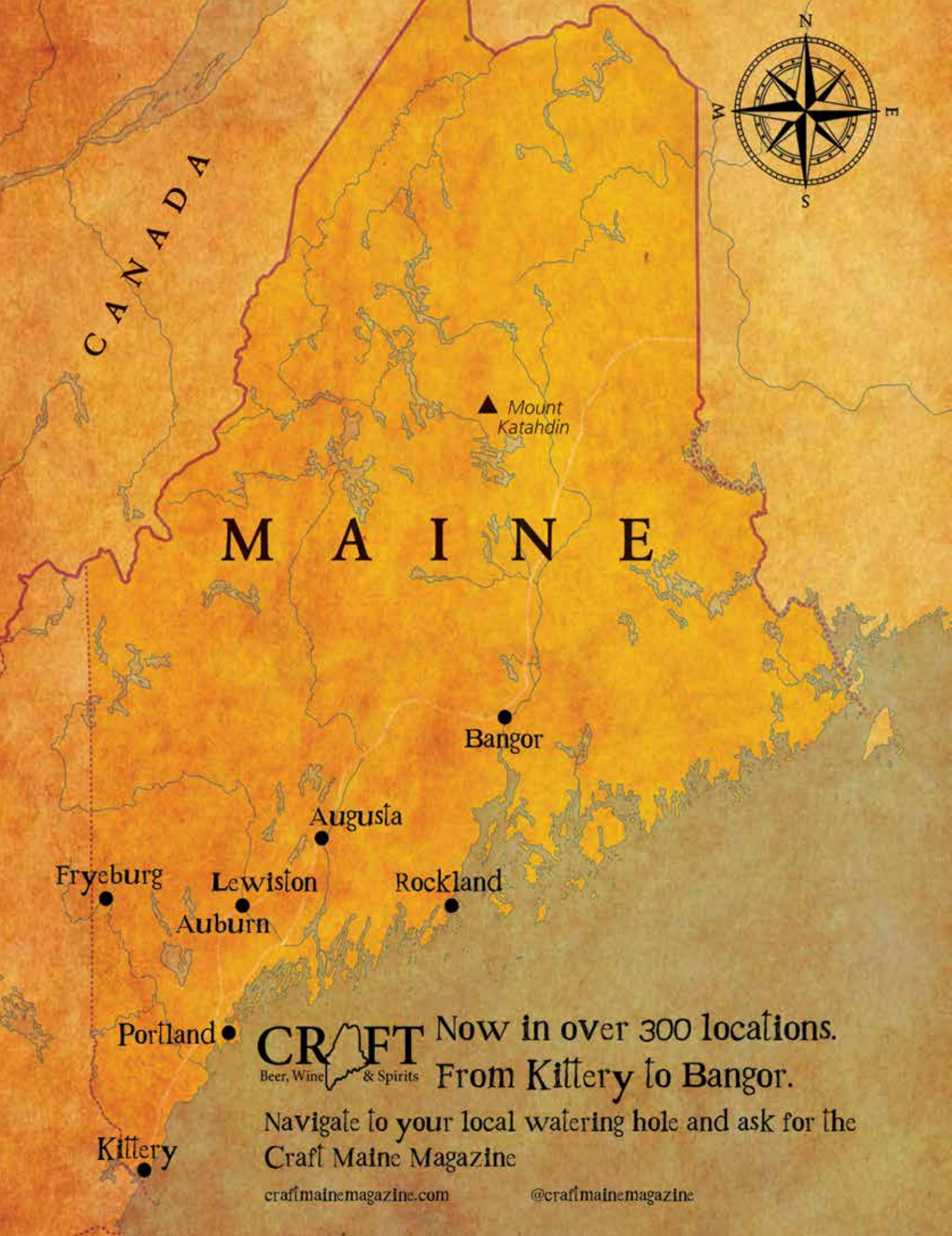
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