

CRAFT

Beer Wine & Spirits

Gather Around the Keg

Page 7

The Royal Family of Beer

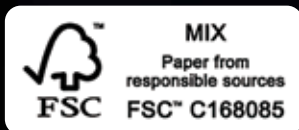
Page 11

The Table That Holds Us

Page 15

Family-Friendly Taprooms

Page 25



FREE
Locally Owned And
Published In Maine

May | June 2026

FEATURES

VOLUME 5 - ISSUE 3 - MAY | JUNE 2026

7 Gather Around the Keg by Jeff Cutler



11 The Royal Family of Beer by Jonathan Strieff

15 The Table That Holds Us by Beverly Ann Soucy

25 Family Friendly Taprooms by Dave Bolton



PUBLISHER

Jodi Cornelio

DESIGNER

Brett Bannister

bbannister@turnerpublishing.net

CONTENT COORDINATOR

George McGregor

gmcgregor@turnerpublishing.net

SALES

George McGregor

gmcgregor@turnerpublishing.net

Kathlene Clarke

kathlene@turnerpublishing.net

Jessica Mason

jess@turnerpublishing.net

Glenn Bechard

glenn@turnerpublishing.net

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Jeff Cutler

Jonathan Strieff

Beverly Ann Soucy

Dave Bolton

Proofreading by: Glenn Bechard
& Robin Robertson



craftmaine@turnerpublishing.net
craftmainemagazine.com
www.turnerpublishing.net

Craft Maine Beer, Wine & Spirits features content about beer, wine, spirits, and alcohol-related products and information. In addition, the magazine features articles, political editorials, legal information, and news relevant to the craft industry. All content within our publication and on our website is for educational and entertainment purposes only and should not be considered personal, legal, or medical advice. Both the printed publication and website are intended for those over the age of 21. In the state of Maine, alcohol is intended for use by those 21 and older. If consuming, please keep out of the reach of children. The Publisher assumes no responsibility for the advertisements within this publication. We strive to ensure the accuracy of the information published. The Publisher cannot be held responsible for any consequences which arise due to errors or omissions. Reproduction in whole or in part is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.

**AGENCY
LIQUOR STORE**

**THANK YOU
PATRONS!**



TWO UNIQUE STORES CONVENIENTLY LOCATED IN THE SAME SHOPPING CENTER



DISCOUNT BEVERAGE STORE

*Your one-stop
shop for all
your needs.*

*The selection
is outta
this world!*

WINE

LIQUOR

1,900 choices 1,800 choices

CRAFT BEER HARD CIDER

1000+ choices 400 choices

Supermarket Open Daily, 7 a.m.–8 p.m.

U.F.O. Beverage Store Open Daily, 9 a.m.–8 p.m.

Catch our weekly ad on our website!

**639 Roosevelt Trail (Rte. 302), Naples, Maine 04055
207-693-3988 • theumbrellafactorysupermarket.com**

Locally Owned & Operated by David & Gail Allenson

IT'S ALWAYS WORTH THE TRIP.



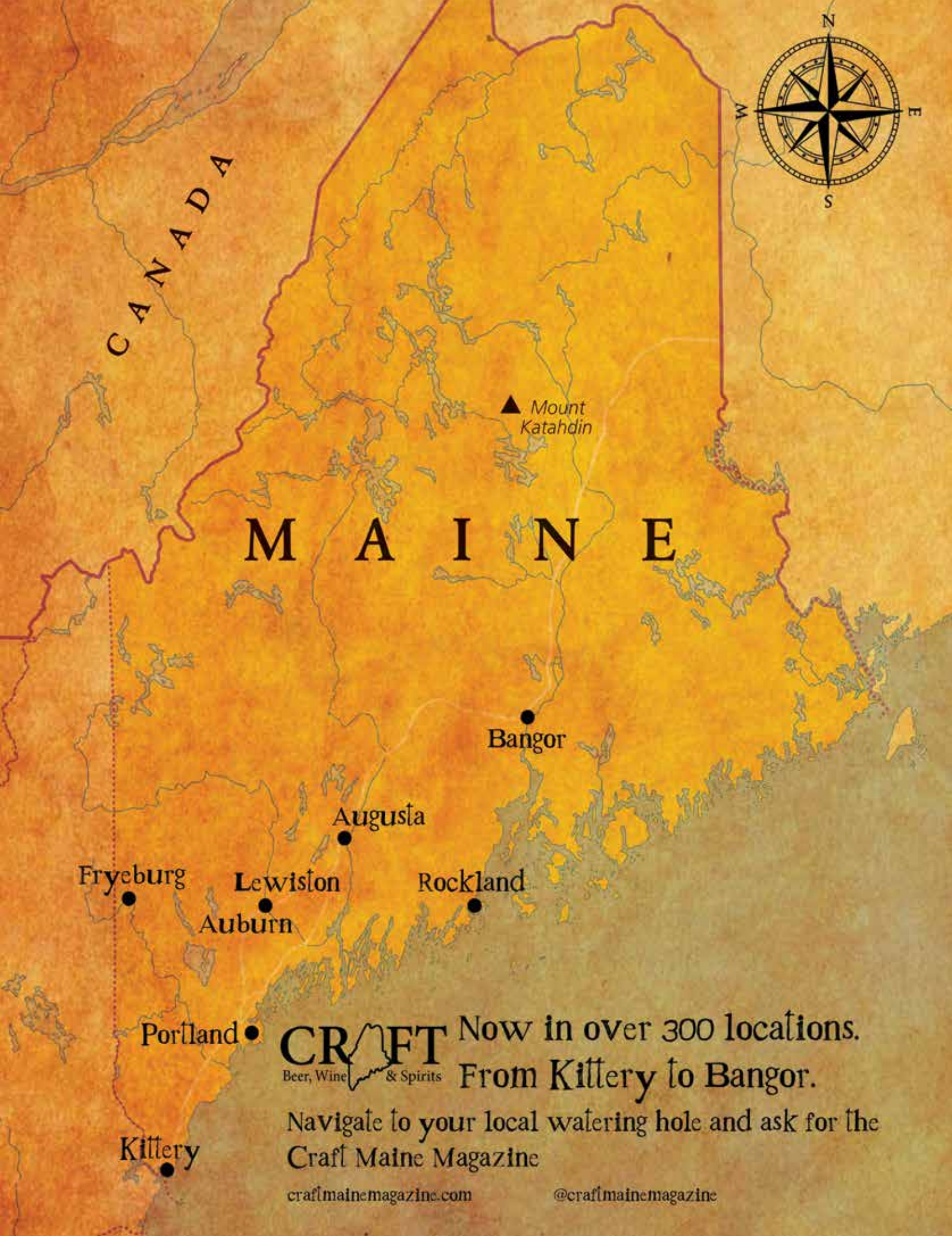
Enhance your New Hampshire adventure with a visit to the New Hampshire Liquor & Wine Outlet! No matter where in New Hampshire your travels take you, you're never far from one of our outlet locations.

New Hampshire-made wines and spirits can be found throughout any of our conveniently located outlets—perfect for bringing home a true taste of the Granite State!



FOLLOW US FOR SAVINGS     [LiquorandWineOutlets.com](https://www.LiquorandWineOutlets.com)

*Some restrictions apply. Exclusive, Last Chance and Multi-Bottle Promotion items not included. Please drink responsibly.



CANADA

MAINE

▲ Mount Katahdin

Bangor

Augusta

Fryeburg

Lewiston

Auburn

Rockland

Portland

Kittery

CRAFT
Beer, Wine & Spirits

Now in over 300 locations.
From Kittery to Bangor.

Navigate to your local watering hole and ask for the
Craft Maine Magazine

craftmainemagazine.com

[@craftmainemagazine](https://twitter.com/craftmainemagazine)



Gather Around the Keg *When Friends are Family*

Written by Jeff Cutler



When was the last time you gathered with friends around a campfire? Or sat around a USB speaker on a pontoon boat? Maybe you huddled next to a keg in a shack on some ice or even shared some **liquid ‘refreshment’ on a chairlift** one afternoon.

Regardless of the location. Regardless of the season. As long as you’re within the borders of **Maine**, there’s a connection we forge with others who drink. And these days, you don’t need to get hammered to have a good time. Seriously.

With the influx of non-alcoholic offerings, there’s no reason these days not to gather and raise a glass together. In fact, if the current bar scene is an indicator of what’s coming, the entire state is going to

benefit from **MORE people going out drinking.**

They just might not be drinking alcohol

If we step back a moment and examine our respective histories, we most likely can identify some friends or relatives who **might enjoy their beer too much.** We most likely can even remember the point when booze slipped a wedge between family members.

And **that wedge used to last forever** in some cases. Luckily, the emergence of non-alcohol drinks has started to dissolve that wedge. In fact, the social aspect of drinking is probably now stronger than ever because of mocktails and NA spirits.

To explain, there are a handful of times during the year that

Drinking Culture

drinking is encouraged. St. Patrick's Day; Memorial Day;

Fourth of July; Labor Day; omigod this isn't a handful, it's a shopping list! Going on, practically every time family gets together to observe a significant holiday, there's some booze present.

I didn't fully appreciate this until one year I looked around at Christmas and realized a third of the people were missing. They had decided not to celebrate an occasion with family because of their **desire for a drink**. And back in those days, the two choices at a family party were booze or coffee.

Nobody even thought about soda

Non-alcohol offerings were not an option in those days. And some people would humiliate you if you drank the mixer without any booze in it. Again, you didn't want to be the guy who **finished off the cranberry juice** 10 minutes into a Cape Codder party.

But I digress. **The focus of today's piece** is how to enjoy family more - with or without the buzz. If you want the buzz but don't want the people, that's a different column.

If that's the case, you are essentially having a drink with yourself while the world goes on around you. Your choice, but if you don't want to be around people, you can visit a bar and be invisible.

Revisiting the theme of family

The last time you had a beer with a friend, you didn't **stare at each other for 40 minutes**. Nope. You talked. You discussed work and family and friends and pets and the world. You probably talked about sports or fishing or hiking or reading or knitting. And you definitely talked about eating, and likely shared some gossip.

Ultimately, the discussion and camaraderie in that 40 minutes with a friend were akin to the interactions you have with close siblings and other relatives. And there it is...you have forged a family bond where one never existed.

You have now turned a friendship into something stronger. Drink has delivered this miracle because of how it can bring us together, with or without alcohol.

An experiment for you

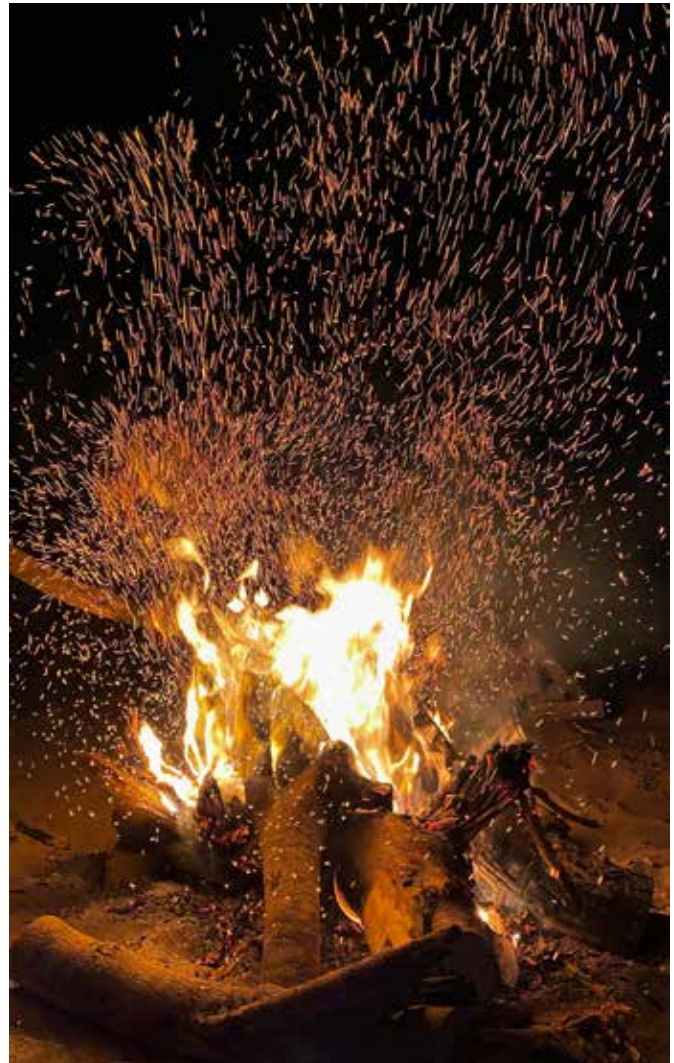
Examine the community you had before and after your drinking behavior. Even if you're on the wagon or prefer to go with NA choices, you'll probably notice a few ways in which the crowd has changed... or grown.

Maybe it's an age thing. Once we're on the other side of 30, we start to think of ourselves more as a brand. Not like social media wannabe influencers, but a brand like: hey, that guy is dependable. Or, hey, I think she's one of those oyster farmers that has that restaurant in Bath. Or even, hey, that person always has a nice thing to say and they make me feel good when I'm with them.

That's the type of family...err, community we all want to have. The one that supports us and our dreams. The family (or friends) who want to join you in your adventures and hear about them after the fact.

The family - blood-relatives or not - that you spend time with is more valuable than you can understand. Put in the time to see your friends and family. Continue to **build your community**, and try to be that family member all your friends can rely on.

Your best drinking friends are here in Maine. Just **look around and find them**.







The Royal Family of Beer

Jonathan Strieff

Drive past any package store, gas station, or Dollar General and you will likely see a sign that reads something like this:

**BUD FAMILY
24 PACK
\$19.99**

The promise of domestic, macro-brews at discount prices seems straight forward enough, but who exactly are the members of the, “Bud Family?” It seems unlikely that your local cashier would honor the deal if you asked him or her to ring up four 6-packs of Corona, Modelo, Michelob, or Stella Artois, even though these, and hundreds of other brands, fall under the exclusive intellectual property of the Anheuser-Busch Corporation. AB InBev (the corporate parent company of all things Budweiser) is much more than just the largest beer company in the history of the world; it is a cultural “beer-hemoth” responsible for shaping the tastes of generations of beer drinkers all across the globe. The company owns approximately 630 brands in 150 different countries, averages nearly \$60 billion in gross sales annually, manages more than \$200 billion in assets, and employs more than 150,000 people. AB InBev did not achieve this kind of market domination by creating the best tasting beer known to mankind, but by absorbing one brewery after another until it owned a portfolio of beer styles to meet every imaginable taste and demographic. If we are meant to think of Budweiser as a family, it is clearly a royal family on par with the Starks, Lannisters, and Targaryens. Within the Bud Family, it’s undeniable that the title of patriarch and head of the household belongs to Bud Heavy. With the iconic red and white label and cursive front, Budweiser Beer has etched the family name upon the walls of history in a way any father shy of Abraham would envy. Founded in St. Louis, 10 years before the start of the Civil War, Budweiser has endured the ups and downs our nation has faced for more than 2/3 of its history. The brand survived prohibition, the Great Depression, two world wars, and more than one marketing misstep (WASSSUUPPP, anyone?). Coors and Miller are certainly big players as well but, growing up I knew Budweiser was beer before I even knew what beer was. Most fatherly of all, Bud Heavy created the opportunities for the other members of the Bud Family to make their own way.

Like in most families, Papa Bud Heavy may be the boss, but Mama Bud Light is clearly in charge. Introduced in the 90’s with



On Tap



half the calories of the original, Bud Light immediately filled a market niche for a beer intended to be drunk by the gallon. Pass any frat house or beer pong tournament on garbage day and the bins will invariably be overflowing with baby blue cans. Bud Light spent nearly 25 years as the number 1 best selling beer in America and likely would have retained the top spot indefinitely had they not offended certain thin skinned, influential culture warriors. In 2023, Bud Light made the mistake of recognizing transgender people as actual living, breathing, (and most importantly, drinking) human beings, no different from anyone else. This outrageous affront to basic decency inspired many whiney Snowflakes like Kid Rock to take up their AR-15s and declare, “Over my dead body.” The Bud Light boycott that resulted from this ignorant and asinine social media stunt caused Bud Light sales to crater, plummeting it all the way down to being the second most popular beer in America. In an irony likely too nuanced to be understood at this year’s Alternative Super Bowl Halftime Show, the new number one in 2023 was Modelo Especial, another AB InBev brand.

The descendants of these proud parents have gone to great lengths to differentiate themselves and stand out on their own merits. Bud Ice, Bud Dry, Bud Extra, Budweiser 0, Budweiser Select 55, Bud Light Seltzer. Clearly, no nepo babies here. Bud Light Lime could reasonably be seen as the first real breakaway style in

the Bud Family. Introduced in 2008, Lime is the first of an evolving, citrus themed “Peels,” group from Budweiser. Responding to changing tastes among younger drinkers, Lime appears to be a beer marketed unapologetically to children. It’s sassy! It’s sweet! It’s something your parents would never consider drinking! But, it’s also cheap and accessible.

The other next gen Bud with some of its own name recognition is Bud Light Platinum. This is like the daughter of Bud Light who married up into the aristocracy but stayed true to her roots. The beer is a little sweeter and a little stronger than regular Bud Light, but its real distinction is the translucent blue glass bottle that looks like a prop from the Avatar movies. Unlike Lime, it’s the kind of beer you could offer your parents visiting your new home and make them feel proud of the choices you’ve made.

Then there’s the extended family. Michelob, Rolling Rock, Busch, Natty, Land Shark, Goose Island, Elysian, Cobra, Hi Gravity, and so many more. At home or abroad, there’s really no escaping the reach of the Bud Family, and why should there be? All families are complex, with secret histories, and distant relatives we don’t see often. Investigating the ties connecting the Bud Family helps to show how all of us, despite our different tastes, are still one big family of beer lovers. So, this Bud’s not just for you, but for the whole family.





The Table That Holds Us

on family dinners, French Catholic kitchens, and jelly jars

Written by Beverly Ann Soucy

If you have ever stood at a stove long enough to know the difference between a simmer and a suggestion, there is a moment that you recognize when a kitchen stops being a room and becomes something closer to a church. The onions have gone translucent in the butter. The wine you poured into the pan is doing that gorgeous thing where it hisses, reduces, and turns the whole house into an argument about whether or not you should have used the whole bottle or if you were right in insisting a glass for the cook and a glass for the pan. And somewhere behind you, voices are rising and falling, silverware is hitting a drawer, somebody is telling a story that isn't quite true but is better that way, and without any ceremony at all, your family has gathered together.

That is the thing about the table. It doesn't ask you to show up. It just waits, quietly and with invitation and eventually, everyone does.

I have spent most of my adult life in and around food, owning restaurants, managing kitchens, spending years in the particular beautiful madness of service industry hours and the way Friday night at eight o'clock can make you feel like you are simultaneously living your best and worst life. I have eaten in some extraordinary places, created ten course meals, sat at wine and champagne tastings as a guest and sat at tables by invitation that were some genuinely humbling ones, and I will tell you with complete sincerity that the meals I remember most clearly, the ones that live somewhere in my chest rather than just my memory and belly were not plated by anyone with a culinary degree. They were made by women in housedresses who measured by feel, who kept their recipes in their heads like secrets, and who believed with absolute conviction that feeding people was an act of love so fundamental it barely needed saying. It was their love language long before that phrase was born.

My grandmother was one of those women. My mother learned from her mother, and I learned from my mother, the art of scratch cooking where the meals took time sometimes days and somewhere in that chain of transmission that quiet, unspoken handing-down of how to make a proper pot of soup or why you always deglaze with wine and never, ever

with water, I came to understand that a family's food is its autobiography, it's "love language." It is the thing that tells you who you are and where you came from even when you have forgotten to ask.

I grew up in a small town in rural Maine. And when I say small, I mean the kind of small where the biggest landmark on your street is the church, and the church is enormous. Not because the congregation was particularly wealthy but because the French Canadians who built it understood that grandeur was a form of prayer. We lived directly across the street from that church. I am not exaggerating when I say I could tell time by the bells without ever once checking a clock.

French Catholic is its own particular cultural ecosystem, and if you did not grow up in it, there are a few things you should know. First, the food is extraordinary, everything made from scratch and grown in the well tended gardens round the back. Second, the guilt is extraordinary. Third, these two things are almost certainly related. The kitchen in a French Catholic household runs on butter, salt pork, and a kind of cheerful fatalism that is absolutely delicious to be around. There is tourtière at Christmas, with its savory meat filling spiced with cloves and allspice. It is the sort of pie that makes you understand why people used to survive winters without central heating, meaty and filling and you simply ate enough of it that the cold became an abstraction. There are cretons, which is a pork spread that sounds modest and tastes like something your mother made specifically so you would never be able to fully enjoy fancy things in the future because nothing would ever measure up, the recipe from her own mother passed on down. There is pea soup that simmers all day Monday because it is Monday and that is what you do on Monday after a big ham with bone-in Sunday supper with the leftovers, and there is no further discussion required.

And there is wine. Not in the way that wine culture talks about wine, not with tasting notes and terroir and the earnest comparisons to dark fruit forward, pepper and leather saddle. Wine in our house was about the table. It was about the meal. It was about the gathering and quantity. My grandmother kept a big bottle in the kitchen pantry on the floor under the canned

Food & Wine

goods shelf, the way other people kept a jar of bacon grease. It was a cooking ingredient, a social lubricant, a ritual object, and occasionally a diplomatic tool, and sometimes all four in the same afternoon.

Which brings me, inevitably, to Wild Irish Rose.

I want to be clear that my grandmother was not what you would call a connoisseur. She was something better, she was a woman who understood hospitality at the cellular level, who believed that having something to offer someone was a form of dignity, and who approached the question of what to serve with a combination of practicality, generosity, and an absolute refusal to be embarrassed about what she had on hand. She also believed that blackberry brandy and wearing layers to sweat it out, could cure the flu or a nasty cold.

At Sunday supper in a predominantly French Catholic community, it wasn't unheard of for the parish priest to come to dine on occasion. This was not unusual in French Catholic communities of a certain era. The parish priest was a figure who moved through domestic life with some regularity appearing at tables, offering blessings, accepting hospitality with the practiced grace of someone who had accepted a great deal of it. He was a gentle man with a red nose who liked to tell jokes, from what I remember. He had good manners and a patient face and he always seemed genuinely glad to be wherever he was, which is a quality I have come to consider deeply underrated in human beings.

And my grandmother, bless her heart and her complete imperviousness to wine snobbery, served him Wild Irish Rose out of a jelly jar.

For those who have not encountered it: Wild Irish Rose is a fortified wine, sweet and red, and the kind of thing that gets described in polite company as "unpretentious" and in impolite company with a great deal more color. It was produced in bulk, sold cheaply, and consumed with enthusiasm by people who were not particularly interested in what the critics thought about it. It was also, I will note, exactly sixteen percent alcohol by volume, a detail that seems relevant in retrospect when you are talking about the man who ran the spiritual lives of half the town.

My grandmother on occasion mostly around the holidays poured it into the good glasses as well instead of jelly jars. She would set them out on a proper linen tablecloth along with her pretty favorite dishes a wedding gift that was only used on the specialist of occasions. She passed the tray of dishes

with cretons, crackers, pickles and the dark rye bread on little China plates a holiday tradition long before charcuterie boards were a thing. She sat across from that priest and she was gracious and composed and entirely herself, and he drank every drop she offered him, held his glass for refills, and thanked her warmly, and that was that. There was no irony in it. There was no apology for it. This was what she had, and what she had was giving fully, and that is a lesson about hospitality that I have been trying to recreate for my whole life.

I think about that scene more often than is reasonable. I have attended a lot of wine tastings over the years for being in the hospitality industry and know the grapes and the winemakers intimately but I still think about it all, those moments with that big jug of Wild Irish Rose and my gram, when I am standing in front of a wine wall trying to decide what to bring to dinner at someone else's house, second-guessing myself through a dozen bottles for remembering which grape had it's best season before landing on something whose label I like. I think about it when I watch people at a restaurant fuss and perform over a wine list, trying to impress whoever is watching instead of just finding something they actually want to drink. I think about it when I remember that the whole point of wine, all of it, the growing and the making and the aging and the pouring is the same point as the table itself. It is about being together. It is about the moments and about making someone feel, at least for a little while, entirely and completely welcome.

I managed and owned restaurants for many years and I have watched the culture of the table shift in real time and have watched the way we eat together change, and not entirely for the better.

The family dinner, as a concept, is having a moment of cultural rediscovery right now. There are studies about it and I am always a little wary of studies about things that our grandmothers and mothers simply did without needing a study that suggests that families who eat together regularly produce children who do better in school, communicate more openly, develop stronger senses of identity, and are more resilient in the face of difficulty. Which is, if you think about it, exactly the kind of thing you would expect if you had ever sat at a table where the conversation ranged from parish gossip to serious family business to an inexplicable argument about whether a song that came on the radio was actually as good as everyone seemed to think, or which side of the political fence was better, all in the space of forty minutes.

The table is where you learn to talk to people you did not

Food & Wine



Food & Wine



Food & Wine



choose. It is where you learn to argue without walking away. It is where you develop, slowly, imperfectly, with a great deal of spilled milk both literal and metaphorical the capacity to be in relationship with other human beings. And the food and the wine that come with it are not incidental to that process. They are part of it. The very fabric of it all.

Think about it; think about what wine actually does at a table. Not in terms of pairings and varietals, though we will absolutely get to that because I cannot help myself, but in terms of what it does to the atmosphere. A bottle on a table is an act of slowing down time. It says: this is not going to be rushed. It says: we are going to sit here, and eat this food, and talk to each other, and the evening has unbridled permission to unfold at its own pace. In a world that has become genuinely, alarmingly good at speeding everything up, a bottle of wine on a table is an act of small but meaningful resistance and yes, connection.

My grandmother knew this. She did not know she knew it, because she would not have described it this way, instead she would have said she was just having supper, same as always. But that is the thing about wisdom that gets passed down through practice rather than through words. It lives in the

body. It lives in the hands that set the table. It lives in the habit of reaching for the bottle when someone sits down.

Alright, now, let us talk about the wine. Because I am who I am and I cannot write about the family table without talking about what you put on it.

French Canadian cooking is deeply, stubbornly, and beautifully its own thing. It is not French cooking from France it is a cuisine that developed in a cold climate among people who worked hard and needed to eat heartily and had access to specific and seasonal ingredients and no patience whatsoever for fussiness. It is salt pork and maple syrup and game meat and root vegetables and dairy that would make a cardiologist weep. It is also, I will argue until my last breath, one of the most genuinely satisfying food traditions in North America, and it has wine needs to match.

Tourtière, that magnificent, spiced meat pie I mentioned earlier, that we used to eat every Christmas Eve after midnight mass and again for breakfast the next morning, absolutely and unequivocally needs something with spine to it. You need a wine with enough body to stand up to the allspice and clove and the rich fatty dark meat, but you also want something with



enough acidity to cut through the pastry. A good Côtes du Rhône works beautifully here, that southern French blend of grenache and syrah and mourvèdre that tastes like it was made specifically to sit on a table in a cold place. A Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, earthy and a little rustic, is deeply underrated with meat pies of all kinds. If you are feeling particularly generous with yourself, a Châteauneuf-du-Pape is not wrong, though I acknowledge that this is a more extravagant gesture than my grandmother would have made. But at some point it is perfectly okay and encouraged to splurge on the finer things in life.

Pea soup, the thick, slow-cooked, salt-pork-enriched, ham bone variety that defines a certain kind of Monday in a certain kind of Maine household is a wine pairing that nobody talks about and everyone should. You want something simple and honest. A dry Riesling from Alsace has the structure and the slight mineral quality that lifts the sweetness of the split peas without fighting it. A good Muscadet, briny and clean, does something unexpectedly lovely with the salt pork. And if you want to stay domestic and support what Maine's own winemakers are doing with cold-hardy varieties, a well-made La Crescent that hybrid white grape that has been quietly thriving in our northern climate brings a honeyed citrus note that, improbably and wonderfully, pairs beautifully with peasant cooking.

Cretons, that pork spread bit of deliciousness; that glorious unreasonable pork spread, wants a crisp sparkling wine or a dry, bready pet-nat. The fat in the cretons needs something with bubbles and acidity to cut through it and reset the palate. This is also, I will note, an excellent argument for serving sparkling wine at family dinners before the main event, which is an argument I will always be prepared to make.

And for the dessert table the tarte au sucre, the lemon meringue pie, the sugar cookies with their thin pastel frosting that my mother and grandmother made at Christmas, in quantities that defy rational explanation, you want something sweet but not excessive. A good Sauternes if you are being extravagant. A Muscat de Beaumes-de-Venise if you are being sensible. A late-harvest Vidal from a Maine or Quebec producer if you are being local and a little adventurous and want to feel very pleased with yourself, which I highly recommend. And I would add, any of the Dragonfly wines that are produced right here in Maine would pair lovely with any holiday sweet.

My grandmother is gone now. She has been gone for many years and I miss her every day. The big church across the street still stands. I don't know what became of the priest, or the good glasses, or the particular bottle of Wild Irish Rose that sat on the floor in her kitchen pantry like a household saint but

Food & Wine



I do have some of the dishes and yes, the jelly jars hold space in my glass cupboard.

What I know is that I have set a lot of tables in my life. I have set them in restaurants where I was responsible for making sure that dozens of strangers had a good night. I have set them at my own home for holidays that required three days of preparation and a certain amount of optimistic chaos. I have set them in a rush for last-minute meals that somehow turned out better than the planned ones, which is a thing that happens and which I have stopped trying to explain.

And every time I set a table, to this day, every time I think about what wine to open, what food to make, who is coming and what they love and how to make them feel that the evening was made specifically for them, I am doing the exact same thing my grandmother did. I am making a case for presence. I am making an argument, in the quiet language of a set table and an open bottle, that this moment matters.

That these people matter. That the act of gathering and eating and drinking together is not a prelude to the real business of the day but is, in fact, the real business entirely.

There is something about wine that insists on this more than almost any other drink. Beer is convivial, spirits are

celebratory, but wine, wine has a slowness to it, a built-in ceremony of opening and pouring and breathing and that first moment when you hold the glass up and look at the color, the lines and smell, along with what the year made, it invites you to pay attention. Not to the wine, exactly. To the moment. To the people around your table and the fact that everyone showed up, that the food is good, not just good, but exceptional and the light is doing that thing it does in the late afternoon when it falls through the kitchen window and makes everything look like a painting of itself.

My grandmother poured Wild Irish Rose for a priest and thought nothing of it. My own mother cooked for days in preparation of those Sunday suppers. Neither were making a statement about wine or hospitality or the nature of family dinners. They were just doing what they had always done: making someone feel welcome, and was using what they had to do it, and that was enough. I proudly carry on that tradition here in my own little home, with my linen tablecloths and collection of wine and old dishes and I know in my heart of hearts that it will always be enough.

That it has always been enough. And that is the very best part.

Beverly is a fourth-generation herbalist, artist, writer, first grandchild and a food and wine contributor based in Western Maine.

VISIT BREWERIES, GET REWARDED



THE MAINE BEER TRAIL IS NOW ONLINE AT [BEERTRAIL.ME](https://beertrail.me)

CHECK IN HERE

Visit beertrail.me to start your journey, check into this brewery, and get rewarded for visiting Maine breweries!

The Maine Beer Trail is a digital passport program created by the Maine Brewers' Guild, the nonprofit for Maine's brewers. In 2020, the Guild launched the digital version of the Maine Beer Trail with support from the Maine Office of Tourism. You're invited to join thousands of others who have logged their visits to Maine breweries and submitted their Maine Beer Trails for rewards like a Maine Brewers' Guild, hat, t-shirt, or prize pack. Terms and conditions apply, visit beertrail.me or mainebrewersguild.org to find a map of Maine breweries, plan your route, and for more information about beer events around Maine. There is no cost to participate, must be 21 years old or older.

PENMOR



L I T H O G R A P H E R S



- BOTTLE/CAN LABELS
- COASTERS
- BOTTLE OPENERS
- SIGNS & BANNERS
- WINDOW CLINGS
- MAGNETS
- KEG COLLARS
- STATIONARY
- BUSINESS CARDS
- SALES MATERIALS

CHECK US OUT!

Join us for
**Karaoke
and
Trivia Nights!**



Dine in or take out.

Open year round. Live Entertainment, Multiple TV Screens and Great Food! CLEAN, FRIENDLY, FUN.

Phone 864-5616



Main St., Rangeley

Tully's

• BEER AND WINE •

Agency Liquor Store

We have the
**Best Selection of
Beer, Wine, and Cigars
in THREE States!**



45 Wells Plaza - Wells, ME
207-641-8622 • tullysbeerandwine.com



207-213-4345 • 18 BRIDGE STREET, AUGUSTA, ME

ORDER TODAY!

FACEBOOK.COM/TWOMAINEGUYSAUGUSTA





Family-Friendly Taprooms: *Why They Matter*

Written by Dave Bolton

Craft beer is dead. Adults are drinking less. Gen-Z prefers to consume kombucha as opposed to alcohol. Cask-conditioned ale tastes (and looks) like dirty water. All hazy IPAs are essentially the same thing. Kids should not be allowed in taprooms.

If I was to be given a dollar for every time someone uttered any of the above “statements” to me while I was sitting at my local watering hole, I could make enough money to buy a ticket in the upper tiers of the Boston Stadium for one of the upcoming World Cup games. Probably.

Anyone who takes more than a passing interest in both the economics of the beer industry and the trends that underpin its success/failure (delete as necessary) is likely to know that not all of the doom and gloom that I kicked off this article with is too far from the truth.

People are definitely drinking less - around 54% of adults now say they consume alcohol, according to recent Gallup polling - and there are at least 30 different brands of kombucha at my nearest Whole Foods. Which is about 100 less than the hazy IPA section at the liquor store.

Cask ale, while an acquired drinking and flavor profile experience does not taste like dirty water. Say that to any of the 50 or so breweries that were recently pouring excellent cask versions of their products at NERAX 2026 and you would get a very hard stare. Sort of like Paddington Bear, but with the prospect of actual violence. And while I don't condone that sort of behavior (especially among end drinkers), craft beer from a cask is one of the true joys in life.

Craft beer is also not dead. Fact. End of story.

Granted, there have been more brewery closings than openings in the last two years - if you want a plethora of gloomy stats, check out The Brewers Association website for its take on sales, production and consumption - but it's still a billion-dollar business and there are thousands of breweries nationwide that are churning out beer at an impressive rate.

“If the craft beer industry is a ship, we can comfortably say we're no longer in the safety of a harbor. The days of relative calm are behind us, and brewers are getting their sea legs in this new, challenging open water,” said Matt Gacioch, staff economist at the Brewers Association. “Changing consumer behaviors, retailer rationalization, cost increases due to inflation and tariffs, and more competition than ever have been compounding difficulties in 2025. And still, brewers are stepping up to meet today's challenges head on by adjusting their offerings and, sometimes, their entire business models.”

The sea-faring analogy attitude is perfect for where the industry is, and where it might be going.

The headwinds that brewers have been facing in the last five years have not lessened and there have been well-founded concerns that craft beer needs to reset and reboot. I have talked about the “Great Rebalancing” before, but it is worth noting that the concept is less about a beverage sector that needs to painfully readjust to a new normal and more to do with maturing to a more stable and efficient state.

Industry experts do agree that the boom is over, but there is a consensus (especially among Maine brewers, reportedly) that craft beer has reached a plateau. Much of that is related to market saturation, over-production, and a structural shift in consumer preferences and end drinking locations. Craft beer is, industry data suggests, moving into a phase where breweries who are efficient operators with strong branding and a focus on deep-rooted local loyalty will be the winners. In other words, it's not only a reset but an evolution into a sustainable future.

This is not necessarily a bad place to be, more something to be aware of. Maine brewing giants such as Allagash, MBC and Bissell Brothers will continue to be the poster boys for the craft beer community up here, but newer brewers such as Austin Street and Argenta Brewing are using the learned knowledge of their older competitors to not only appeal to seasoned end drinkers but also provide the experiences that define the modern taproom.

Which brings me nicely to my final (and oft-repeated) doom-

Business Of Beer

note; kids should not be allowed in taprooms. Spoiler alert; yes, they should (but not after bed-time).

In a recent interview with News Center Maine, Argenta's Ryan Dunlap said that his decision to open his taproom in 2024 was not only about brewing drinkable styles that would attract a local fanbase but also "capture customers that aren't just craft beer customers." This meant taking a new approach to marketing through social media (TikTok, Instagram) and focusing on the role that taprooms play as gathering spaces within the community.

Pubs and bars have always been seen as the "third place" in our lives, home and work being the other two. The pandemic did a really good job of combining home and work life into one location, but the return to some sort of normal life in 2021 meant that there was an opportunity for drinking venues to become an extension of both. Walk into a taproom in Maine and you will probably find people working on laptops or socializing with other end drinkers.

There are also likely to be families. With kids. Hanging out in a communal setting, drinking beer (the adults, obviously), and taking advantage of the hospitality that underpins the craft beer community as a whole.

We talked about this in our March/April edition, with both Jeff Cutler and Jonathan Strief talking about community engagement and, critically, who is in the drinking venue with you. Jeff, for example, said that the warmer weather and what he called "cabin fever" means that more people will begin to prioritize friends and family, with the latter likely to include people with kids.

And those people will want to go to places that don't just welcome their offspring, but actively want to make them part of their (daytime) drinking community. That does not mean teaching kids to drink alcohol, obviously, rather it's a mature way to ensure that family activities - especially for parents with children that have not mutated into teenagers - can be enjoyed in places that offer pizza, board games, socialization and space to breathe. And craft beer.

The caveat is that there are some (not all) end drinkers who don't enjoy the presence of a rambunctious five-year-old who switches between watching Bluey on a tablet at an audible volume and playing "floor is lava" on the furniture. I used to be one of those people. But I never doubted that bringing your family to a drinking venue was a much-needed escape route for parents to avoid the joys of a crowded playground or somewhere that charges money to frolic in ball-pits.

Growing up in England in the late 70's and early 80's, a visit to



Business Of Beer

the local pub was a treat. Even more so if it had a beer garden and some sort of plastic climbing structure. It's fair to say that I never got taken to a taproom or brewery, but these were simpler times. I would be given a glass of lemonade and a packet of crisps, usually cheese and onion or prawn cocktail, and then told to sit down at a table with my family and their friends. There were no mobile phones or tablets to distract me, instead I got to spend quality time in a non-home setting with responsible adults.

The key word here is responsible. My parents were not big drinkers, and the local pub was not a place they visited often. But they knew that a change of scenery - especially for a kid - was an important part of the family dynamic. The fact that it was an establishment that sold alcohol was almost beside the point. It was all about being together and enjoying the time we had.

Whether kids or anyone under 15 should be in brewery taprooms is always a hot topic. On the one hand, there is the undisputed fact that breweries have marketed themselves as community gathering spaces, which inevitably includes the need to cater to families.

The alternative viewpoint is that these places should be both adult-centric and a safe haven for parents who want some time to themselves. There are also concerns that introducing children to the concept of drinking alcohol in a public space at an early age will, in some way, impact their development and send them down a dark path in later years.

As the father of a five-year-old, I can see both sides. However, I do think that anybody who believes that a child will watch the grown-ups drinking beer in a taproom and store the memory away for future reference is either bitter about the way their own life turned out or just a joyless individual who finds comfort in the bottom of a glass. That is a discussion for another day.

The arguments for allowing kids in a taproom are usually related to the fact that these are community-based, not just a place where binge drinking and anti-social behavior are a distinct possibility. Throw into the mix that the average parent is going to bring a child to the venue during the day, most likely on a weekend or during school holidays, and it is hard to understand why the dedicated end drinker would object. Going out at night with your kids is not something that parents really want to do ... even more so if bedtime is around 7:30 pm.

Being family-friendly is increasingly a business optimization strategy that breweries are happy to adopt. Orono Brewing's flagship location in Orono (naturally) was designed to offer beer, food and family-vibes. It has a huge beer garden and a kid-friendly



Business Of Beer

food menu, opens at midday on a weekend and closes at 9 pm from Wednesday through Saturday. That makes it an excellent option for parents who want to get in quality family time during the daylight hours.

Arguments against having tiny humans in taprooms inevitably involve safety and the environment itself. Most (if not all taprooms) have high-top tables, glassware and a significant amount of people standing or sitting in common spaces. For that reason alone, the NIMBY's say, there is a constant risk of disruption, especially if kids are unsupervised.

Again, I can see both sides. Before I was a parent myself, I was not a big fan of kids in taprooms, but I understood that it wasn't always the child that was at fault.

Nobody wants screaming children sprinting between tables or servers quickly doing the Cruyff turn (it's a soccer reference, feel free to look it up) to avoid being taken out by an underage customer. Out-of-control children can impact the experience for everybody, albeit that some parents can be blissfully oblivious to the chaos being caused.

Parental responsibility is just one part of the debate. Breweries can't force parents to control their children, that is both an over-reach and against the whole idea of family-friendly environments. But there must be a Code of Conduct. If you don't want kids in the taproom, then simply make it a 21+ venue from opening time to close. On the flip side, setting an age restriction makes it very clear that not everybody is welcome and the community vibe is harmed.

Personally, I think this is not the right path to take, not only from a customer standpoint but also in terms of tapping into the hyper-localization trend and community demographics.

Breweries have the right to say who can and cannot be on their premises, but if I knew that my lad could not go in there with me during the day, then I would take my business elsewhere. We also have to consider that state laws differ, especially as breweries are often defined as industrial spaces with surfaces that might not be conducive to a small child running at full-speed towards a sharp corner of the bar.

Speak to any brewer or taproom bartender and there are always horror stories. Public urination, throwing stuff, knocking over glasses, loud or abusive behavior, refusing to leave and causing a scene ... and those transgressions are not always limited to the kids. Breweries have a duty of care to their customers, but families should be aware that being allowed to be there with children is a partnership. As one brewer I know put it, "we are not Chuck E.

Cheese, parents have a responsibility to watch their children ... we are not babysitting them for you while you drink beer."

For the record, my local taproom operates a 21+ policy after 5 pm every day. Which works perfectly for almost all of the parents that take their kiddos there at weekends and, importantly, in the 60 minutes between school pick-up and required home-time. However, there are rules for those of us who enjoy a beer with our offspring, most of which relate to, no surprises here, parental responsibility and respect.

Every taproom or brewery is different but there are likely to be some common ground, irrespective of location and venue size. Active supervision, seating requirements, time restrictions, prohibition of certain behavior (running, chasing, general "horseplay" and screaming) are all part of a Code of Conduct that most parents expect to be enforced. Some taprooms will provide high chairs and changing facilities, others will provide kid-friendly board games and other distractions that don't involve disrupting the grumpy old man at the end of the bar.

Parents also need to be an active participant in deciding whether or not their child will benefit from the experience. Researching the taproom before just turning up with a stroller, an armful of stuffies, various toys and a fully-charged tablet alleviates the potential for being turned away at the door. With the added bonus of not having a screaming child on your arm as you slink away. If you know the rules before you get there, then the chances of unsupervised disruption diminish.

It is worth noting that the debate over whether kids can be in taprooms is not limited to Maine. In fact, it is a nationwide conversation.

Axios reported that there is growing tension in Massachusetts over how and when family-friendly rules apply, with breweries treading a fine line between a full food-and-beverage provider and the casual experience of a traditional 21+ bar where kids are not allowed. This has meant that breweries are posting clear rules on their walls about how children must behave or, in some cases, banning families with kids entirely.

This crackdown is not limited to our neighbors down south. Breweries in New Jersey, Ohio, Colorado and New York have all implemented similar restrictions for younger customers, with the consensus being that being a hoppy playground is not always possible.

For instance, one brewery in Norton, MA, requires children to remain seated with their parents at all times, mainly because there

Business Of Beer



was an increase in the amount of incidents involving “rock-throwing onto Route 123” from the beer garden. Again, we have to take the brewer’s word for it that this was kids ...

Ultimately, it’s down to the breweries, taprooms and venue owners as to who gains access. Family-friendly restaurants have existed for decades, but the evolution of the taproom into a destination for parents and their children is arguably a welcome by-product of the craft beer revolution.

There is also an argument to be made that teaching or displaying responsible drinking habits to someone at an early age could (in theory) encourage a similar path for your child when they reach drinking age. As ever, that is down to the individual parent and how they view drinking culture.

There are legitimate concerns within the beverage industry that the number of American adults who drink alcohol will continue to drop, with the expectation being that it will fall below 50% in the next five years. Nobody is saying that the way to reverse this trend is to focus on the children of current end drinkers, but the craft beer community has made a point of being accessible to all.

Being a parent is not easy, knowing that you can go and enjoy a drink with your family in a welcoming environment is part of why this community matters. Kids will always be kids, giving them exposure to a location that requires social etiquette and a responsible attitude will give them the chance to enjoy family time. In an industrial space. Which happens to serve craft beer.



GREENPASSIONATMACHINE

**Supply your customer with the cash they need!
Get your ATM Machine Today
CALL 207-350-3502**

2026 MEMBERSHIP AVAILABLE. CALL FOR MORE DETAILS.

MEMBER BENEFITS INCLUDE:
 5% Off Pro Shop Merchandise
 Discounted Cart Fees
 (2) Free Guest Greens Fees
 Free Range Balls
 Access to Many Members Only Tournaments

THE HIGHLAND GRILLE
 EAT | DRINK | ENJOY

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC - RELAXED ENVIRONMENT

CLASSIC PUB FAVORITES AND SPECIALTY COCKTAILS
 Featuring Nightly Food and Drink Specials

WE HAVE REGULAR ENTERTAINMENT & EVENTS, COREHORN TOURNAMENTS & TRIVIA! COME CHECK IT OUT.

CALL FOR INFORMATION ON SPECIAL EVENTS!

GOLF SEASON HOURS: MON - THURS 11AM-9PM
 FRI & SAT 11AM-10PM | SUN 11AM-8PM

OFFERING DINE IN & TAKE OUT
 10 HIGHLAND AVE., TURNER, ME | 224-7090
 LIKE US ON FACEBOOK @thehighlandgrille

SAVE 15% ON YOUR ELECTRIC BILL TODAY

"I just signed up with Maine Community Solar after leaving a message with them yesterday. My call was courteous, professional and the agent was personable. (I had left messages with a couple of other companies and they still haven't gotten back to me). The sign up process was simple and took about 5 minutes. It will take a few months before the process is complete, but another vendor had given me a date sometime in the next calendar year. I am happy to be doing this and dealing with a Maine company."

*Bob Barton
Westbrook*

Call our office in Portland at 207-888-3670 or visit www.mainecommunitysolar.org for assistance.

Join a local solar farm. When you do,

- You support local, renewable energy
- There's nothing to buy, install, or maintain
- You join a free, state-backed program
- Get a \$50 gift card as a Thank You



*1052 Minot Avenue, Auburn
783-6885*

***AUBURN'S FINEST
STEAK HOUSE
FOR 20+ YEARS!***



***It's where
you come to
eat and
stay to visit!***

Open 7 Days a Week 11:30am to close





MarijuanaVille MAINE

ALFRED - AUGUSTA - BANGOR - WINSLOW
GARDINER - NEWPORT - READFIELD - UNITY
WATERVILLE - WILTON - LEWISTON - ORLAND

**LEWISTON #2 & PORTLAND
COMING SOON!!**

1G PRE-ROLLS 30 FOR \$100

1.5G PRE ROLLS 25 FOR \$100

7G BALLER DAB JARS FOR \$50

1G DABS FOR ONLY \$10

\$40 OZ OF FLOWER

1G CARTS FOR \$15 or 10 for \$100

400MG CANDY BARS FOR \$20

500MG GUMMIES \$25 OR 5 FOR \$100

THCA DIAMONDS FOR \$10

FREE MED CARDS

AND MUCH MUCH MORE!!!!

**OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK
365 DAYS A YEAR**

MUST BE 18 W/ A MED CARD - CGR#25709

