

Massachusetts Grain to Glass: Goodfellow's Brewing



Connecting growers and brewers through sustainable initiatives can take some creativity. Brewing ingredients are easy to source on the national market, but finding local ingredients can be less straightforward. Goodfellow's Brewing Company in Lakeville, Massachusetts has created a farmer-brewery partnership. The brewery is situated on Frugal Endeavors, a 5-acre farm dedicated to growing hops, pumpkins, blackberries, and other artisanal brewing ingredients. All of the agricultural products grown on the farm eventually end up in Goodfellow's beer. This brewer-grower relationship epitomizes a pairing that supports local farms while allowing for creativity and terroir in local craft beers.

In 2003, John Goodfellow brewed his first batch of beer using an \$8 homebrew kit. Over the next few years his interest and skillset in brewing grew, and he transitioned to professional equipment. In 2008, Goodfellow's blonde ale was a top five finalist and first in category in Sam Adam's Patriot Homebrew Competition. While this endeavor bolstered the brewery's reputation, his 1st-place category win for ESB in 2008 solidified his plans to open a commercial brewery.

During the formation of the brewery, local brewers and the Massachusetts Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission (ABCC) were debating a requirement that any "Farmer-Brewer" source more than 50% of their ingredients from local farms. The local-sourcing initiative didn't pass, however Goodfellow wanted to be as true as possible to the original intent of the law, which was to strengthen local agriculture and foster locally and artistically-crafted products.



By 2011, Goodfellow had formalized the business plan, bootstrapped the necessary capital for the operation, acquired all of the necessary licensing and made plans to lease a facility that would become their brewery. Just before signing the lease, Lakeville farmer Paul Hunt approached them with a unique partnership opportunity.

He had been growing cranberries for nine years at his Frugal Endeavors farm in Lakeville, and was looking to diversify. Hops were his choice, after soil testing and other considerations. In the meantime, a local businessman connected him with Goodfellow, the day before the brewing space lease was to be signed.

*John and Lisa Goodfellow next to the hop field, about a month after harvesting.
Photo: Phil Marquis*

They connected to form a genuine farmer-brewery partnership. They all worked together to design and build the brewery. In January 2013, the new brewery produced their first batch of beer and became profitable within nine months of their launch.

The relationship between Goodfellow's Brewing and Frugal Endeavors farm is designed to be mutually beneficial. The brewery pays a fixed amount for rent, and then any profits made from the beer are shared between the two businesses. Whatever is divested from the brewery is invested in the farm, so that when Goodfellow's does well, so does the farm. Constant communication between the two parties strengthens their relationship relating to the products needed for brewing and the crop status.

Blackberry Stout

When Frugal Endeavor's pumpkin yield was lower than expected, Hunt suggested the blackberry crop as a brewing ingredient. John was excited at the opportunity of using blackberries in his next beer. After only one pilot batch, John now produces a seasonal blackberry stout, which is a big hit with consumers.

Brewing System



John, Goodfellow next to his custom pilot batch brewing system. Photo: Phil Marquis



Goodfellow designed and built a custom pilot batch system that allows him to test new recipes that feature local specialty ingredients. He worked to design and fabricate a customized 1-barrel system, which would more accurately reflect the 5-barrel scale that the full brewery operates on. The lower the discrepancy between the pilot system and the full brewing system, the more accurate the brewer can predict ingredient quantities when a full batch is produced. Goodfellow's brewing system is designed to use water effectively. Instead of disposing of the water used in the heat exchange, it is pumped back into their kettles to be used in cleaning and as the starting point for their next batch.

A selection of freshly harvested hops from Frugal Endeavors farm. The hops are dried and put into muslin bags before being used in the kettle during the brewing process. Photo: Phil Marquis

Goodfellow is investigating solutions for the bottleneck challenges that many brewers face, for example, investing in a pelletizer which would make brewing with local hops easier. (Most brewers do not use fresh hops.)

Goodfellow's Brewing relationship with Frugal Endeavors Farm is an excellent example of brewers directly supporting local agriculture. The brewery gives structure for a closed-loop, sustainable business plan. Furthermore, partnering with local growers supports agricultural practices with potentially a low environmental impact that can strengthen the socio-economic fabric in our communities.