

Sparkling wines on tap shake up brewpub culture

BY TIM TRAINOR

Redmond Spokesman

In beer-crazy Central Oregon, a Redmond couple is hoping something fresh will draw in drinkers: wine.

Sparkling wine, to be exact — naturally carbonated and run through the taps next to your local lager, so every pour is fresh and no half-empty bottles go to waste.

Debra Worthen-Brey and Phil Brey launched their company, Sand Lily Sparkling Wines, last year. Their first batch of finished wines are now on tap in Bend and Redmond. For now, the two-person team are the winemakers, distributors and the marketers — taking on every job necessary to get the business off the ground.

The Breys hope they've found a niche in the region's overflowing beverage industry. While champagne and its non-French relatives are common at parties and wine shops, the couple doesn't see it often in dive bars and brew pubs in the region.

Sparkling wine on tap is common in some parts of Europe and starting to show up in the U.S., said Worthen-Brey. Some event-specific mobile wine carts now have it on hand, but it's still pretty rare to see it on the tap list next to the Bud Light.

For now, the couple is offering two varieties — a brut and a brut rosé, both with an ABV of 12 percent. The brut is made with 100 percent chardonnay grapes while the rosé is a blend of both chardonnay and pinot noir, giving it a flavor more of raspberry and cherry.

They start with Willamette Valley grapes grown in the hills near Philomath. Brey adds sugar and yeast to the tank of crushed grapes and lets it ferment over a period ranging from six weeks to two months. Time and fermentation work to create a naturally carbonated wine. After that, Brey can add finishers to smooth out and play up specific flavors.



Courtesy photo

The Sand Lily rosé is a blend of both chardonnay and pinot noir, giving it a flavor more of raspberry and cherry.



Courtesy photo

The sparkling wine is sold in kegs so it can be served on tap at local bars.

For now, you can find Sand Lily on tap at Otto's Landing in Redmond, and at Boneyard and Van Henion in Bend. Mixologists have already come around to it, said Worthen-Brey, because it makes it easier for them

to add fresh bubbles to champagne-based cocktails. Keeping the wine in kegs also helps reduce waste. Skipping the bottle phases reduces material use and packaging. Brey is a longtime fixture of



Courtesy photo

Phil Brey of Sand Lily Sparkling Wine uses tanks to add natural carbonation to their varietals that are sold in kegs to local bars.

the Bend brewing community, having worked for Deschutes Brewery back in the 1990s and now for Van Henion Brewing. He said it has been fun to dabble in making wines, moving from a process that takes just hours to brew and bottle to one that can now take months.

"It has slowed me down a lot

and made me take my time," he said. "That's been a nice change." Brey is more comfortable in the beer culture atmosphere of laid-back drinks at home in both dingy bars or outdoor patios. He knows wine can be intimidating for some drinkers and the culture that surrounds it is more sophisticated, some-

times bordering on pretentious. He said Sand Lily hopes to break down some of those barriers with their easy-to-order, easy-to-drink varieties. "We're trying to take some of the pretension out of it by putting it on tap in a bar," said Brey.

■ Reporter: ttrainor@redmondspokesman.com

New wine bar sets sights on fun, community

BY NICK ROSENBERGER

Redmond Spokesman

Redmond residents can plan on a new place to socialize this November when Kari and Michael Nelson open Testimony Wine Bar just north of downtown.

The space, set to open in November, is meant to be a comfortable space to learn about wine, have fun and connect with each other, said Kari Nelson.

"I absolutely love this community," she said. "I want to provide a really fun space that everyone can afford, that everyone has associations with."

The wine bar, located at 307 NW 6th St., will feature a 1,000-square-foot wraparound deck, bottle shop and event space complete with charcuterie offerings and custom-made truffles from Hot Lava Bakery in Sunriver.

"We're not trying to be bougie in here," Nelson said. "We're trying to just have some fun."

Additionally, the bar will be focused primarily on small, boutique winemakers in Oregon and Washington. For the majority of the wines they sell,

Testimony will be the exclusive retailer — meaning customers won't be able to find them anywhere else.

"It's really important to me that I'm able to represent these winemakers in my space because they're mom-and-pop shops," she said. "They don't have the time to go and distribute and sell their products."

And, even though it's a little more work for the Nelsons to learn the winemaker's stories, Kari said it's fun to learn about new producers, watch relationships brew and see how excited winemakers are about the growing industry in Central Oregon.

Additionally, the wine bar will host events, such as a Wednesday open mic, mimosa brunches, paint-and-sip nights, girls night out and winemaker dinners and lectures.

The wine bar is a labor of love for many hands. The Nelsons both work full-time jobs — Michael as an electrical engineer and Kari at St. Charles — though they've done much of the construction themselves and with friends. In the three months since they bought

the property, they've spent nearly every evening and weekend working on the project.

The property wasn't initially for sale until Jeff Casselry, a real estate broker in Redmond who is also a member of the Redmond Rotary Club, realized the 1934 home across from his firm would be the perfect place for Testimony.

When the Nelsons sat down in the living room across from Don Baxter, the prior owner, Kari said it was just an instant friendship. After that, the rest is history.

"We bonded over common interests and a genuine love of Redmond and the community," she said. "He was excited about my business because he had a similar vision for the space."

The seeds of the business were planted years earlier, when the Nelsons moved to Central Oregon from the Willamette Valley. Kari previously ran a wine club called Northwest Wine Explorer. The club would study a wine varietal every month and pair it with food.

"I'm an artist," Kari said. "I love art and

I think wine is a beautiful form of art."

And just like with art, Kari said there's many different styles of wines to study and collect and get intrigued by. Kari said wine can also be a community connector — merging her passion for art with her passion for people.

"I love people," she said. "I love to lean into them. I want to learn about their life. I can't wait to be behind the bar just talking to patrons and getting to know more people in the community."

In a divided society, Kari said the intention of the wine bar is to open up to each other, be vulnerable with each other, have fun and break bread.

"We all have a testimony," she said. "And the more we share it with people, the more we actually come together."

Kari said she felt called by God to connect the community and use wine as a vessel for connecting people.

"It's a passion for God," she said. "It's a passion for wine. It's passion for our community, together."

■ Reporter: nrosenberger@redmondspokesman.com



Nick Rosenberger/Spokesman

Kari Nelson stands next to the sign of the new Testimony Wine Bar at 307 NW 6th St in Redmond on September 1.

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