

DINING

COLUMBIA BAR

Wandering Mountain



Cider and kombucha make a potent potion.

By **RYAN HUME**
FOR COAST WEEKEND

So there is a thing — one of those viral, internet phenomena that invades the zeitgeist by way of Reddit or some other outlet — called Dry January, when people decide to starve off booze for 31-or-so days (I assume because they experienced an opulent Happy New Year and then take a moment to repose, clear-eyed and level-headed).

This is the kind of resolution that seems plausible, as it has an expiration date, just like a carton of milk. No need to take on grandiose ambitions like losing X-number of pounds or finally quitting smoking when you can just take a month to get your mind right. It's an honorable and downright doable project for many.

In years past, this column has devoted its January messages to simple cocktails, usually built around a few bumps of champagne and non-alcoholic hangover cures, like a hefty plate of biscuits and gravy, or a pour of soda water jacked with a few dashes of bitters (a common drink for bar writers who find themselves in a fleeting moment of abstinence).

Shrubs, those concoctions of drinkable vinegar and herbs and/or fruit, peppers or more, like the ones produced by Pilot House Distilling's sister company Grumpy Dog Shrub Co., is another growing market for those pursuing a Dry January. In fact, nationwide, virgin cocktails are making an unashamed comeback as consumers reassess their needs (or how to drive home), though the North Coast and Lower Columbia still tend to favor well-endowed craft cocktails or a shot of Fireball and a pint, depending on where you land.

This year, as the clock struck 2019 amid a governmental shutdown, this dutiful reporter had no interest in chasing such lofty trends of sobriety, but did come upon a happy medium by way of the venerable Bridge & Tunnel Bottleshop & Taproom.

Co-owners Dwayne and Pam Smallwood will celebrate their first in-business anniversary come February. With about 17 beers and ciders usually on tap (often including five or six sours in the mix), and probably the most diverse selection of craft brews in bottles outside of Portland or any other metro area in spitting distance, this shop is incredibly knowledgeable and friendly. Case in point: On a recent visit, everyone sitting at the bar was a local brewer or distiller. This is the place that people who



The 'Wandering Mountain' at Bridge & Tunnel Bottleshop & Taproom in Astoria.

Ryan Hume

make beer get their beer.

Dwayne Smallwood noted in a recent conversation that the small block in downtown Astoria comprising Reach Break Brewing, Revielle Ciderworks and Bridge & Tunnel is now starting to be called the "Duane Street Triangle," though considering that you could throw a stone at Fort George or Pilot House Distilling in either direction, perhaps the "Duane Street Pentagon" should be tossed in as an alternative.

Bridge & Tunnel should also be noted for their commitment to the local arts community: They display a new artist's work every

month on their walls and are open for Second Saturday Art Walks in downtown Astoria. Upcoming events include the pFriem Flanders Roadshow on Wednesday, Jan. 23, which will bring one of Hood River's most celebrated breweries out to the mouth of the Columbia River we all share.

But back to that happy medium: It should be recognized that Dwayne Smallwood was up to heading out to grab fresh orange juice once I pounced upon them unannounced, as they make beer-mosas at special events, but learning they had kombucha on tap, we wandered upon another one of their specialties.

And wandering is an important part of this story: Kombucha and cider are amazing together. You cut down your ABV while introducing probiotics into the mix — it's a kind of magical thinking while drinking. Something nearly everyone wants to do after a robust New Year. Happy medium!

This 50/50 potion includes a ginger-infused kombucha from Happy Mountain, off Division Street in Portland, topped by an equal pour of Wandering Aengus cider, which hails from Salem. Ginger and apples have long been enemies — oh wait ... I'm wrong on that one — check

a lot of desserts to see my error.

But what to call it? The generous owners of Bridge & Tunnel allowed me to christen this combination as a Wandering Mountain (at the moment it is still on tap, but any cider and kombucha should work).

WANDERING MOUNTAIN

- 50 percent Wandering Aengus cider
- 50 percent Happy Mountain Kombucha, ginger-infused

—Recipe courtesy of Dwayne Smallwood, co-owner and proprietor of Bridge & Tunnel, Astoria, Oregon. **CW**