

Couple opens winery on Pittsfield's East Street

By Tony Dobrowolski, Berkshire Eagle Staff

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Donna and Christian Hansen have opened a winery in Pittsfield called Balderdash Cellars.

PITTSFIELD -- In the basement of a former bakery on East Street, below a sandwich shop and a bicycle store, a Pittsfield couple is pursuing what one of them refers to as a "big, big hobby."

Christian and Donna Hansen operate a winery known as "Balderdash Cellars" in that basement space, and will be holding their grand opening on Saturday.

The opening actually signifies the opening of the Hansen's first commercial space, because Balderdash Cellars has been situated in the basement since November 2011.

The couple have sold about \$15,000 worth of wine so far, but only through "word of mouth," Christian Hansen said.

Both are employed at Sabic Innovative Plastics, so this is a hobby that started slowly. "We started in the basement of our house," Christian said. "Then we moved to the garage. But when my wife wasn't able to park her car in there, we quickly realized that I had to find another place.

"We bottled our first wine in late 2012, then a bunch more about a month ago," he said. "So we're finally at the point where we have product to sell."

Wineries are not uncommon in the Berkshires. At least two others, in New Marlborough and Richmond, are located here, according to a Google search of the county. But that type of business, particularly one located in the basement of a city building, in the middle of a commercial district, is rare.

Hansen believes there is a market for his product in the Berkshires.

"It's like a craft brewery," he said. "It's a very specialized product. It's fun for people, and something that we enjoy doing. There's a whole local movement in terms of food and other local production. I think wine made locally fits into that."

Christian Hansen is a professional vintner who interned at a winery in California. The couple, the only employees, receive their grapes from vineyards in California that they do business with, but don't receive the product from out West until the grapes have



(Ben Garver / Berkshire Eagle Staff)

been crushed, placed in drums, and sent to a freezer.

The fermenting and aging of the wine takes place in Pittsfield, in several wooden and stainless steel barrels located in the basement space on East Street. Hansen said the couple spent about \$200,000 on the equipment.

"It takes six months to a year to really make the wine, bottle it, and make it ready for sale," said Hansen, adding that some red wines can take up to two years to complete. "That's why we're just starting to sell wine in some cases."

The Hansens currently produce five wines that range in price from \$14 to \$26. They hope to eventually produce 15 wines of both the red and white variety.

Each wine is named after a funny incident that has occurred to a Hansen family member. "Balderdash," a word that means nonsense, was chosen for the winery's name because it conveys what the couple are trying to get across, Donna Hansen said.

The winery's tasting room will be open this summer from noon to 5 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays, and by appointment. Current hours are also posted on the winery's website and Facebook page.

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