

IS IT SELTZER, OR IS IT BEER? YOU'D BE SURPRISED. P. 14

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beer & weed.

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE WITH A REFINED TASTE / MAINE

06
22

CHEERS TO REGRETS

BROOKE BINION AND THE WORST SUMMER EVER

+ TAKE THE LEAP

BRIDGES WORTH JUMPING OFF

+ BOOZE CHEWS

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PLUS: GROSS' BRANT
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FEATURES



THEWORST SUMMER EVER COVER FEATURE | PG. 10

Brooke Binion's band has "Yes Regrets" about their new album. Sam Pfeifle talks to her about getting back on the road and playing loud.



AFTER PARTY INVESTIGATIONS | PG. 14

If Après is run by a bunch of brewers, why is there no beer there? Caleb Jagoda looks into how they bring a microbrew mentality to seltzer.



BOOZE CHEWS ORIGIN STORY | PG. 18

You can't put alcohol in edibles, right? Right! But that doesn't mean whiskey flavoring is out of bounds. Sam Pfeifle talks to Maine Craft Distilling and Littlefield Confections about



TAKE A LEAP LISTINGS FEATURE | PG. 24

If there's a bridge in Maine, someone's thought about jumping off it on a hot summer day. Cyndle Plaisted Rials finds the best spots for the cool-down curious.

DIY

As the temperatures heat up, so does the need for a good watering plan. **Pg. 22**

RECIPE

Gross' Brant Dadaleares greets summer with a French twist. **Pg. 32**

PLUS

Pg. 6 | News you can use in "This Just In"

Pg. 8 | Beer Babe's favorite Portland bars

Pg. 34 | Spouse has been painting

BEER & WEED'S EVER-ENLARGING TENT



I DEFINITELY THOUGHT ABOUT IT FOR A LITTLE WHILE: WAS I REALLY GOING TO PUT AN OUTWARDLY AND UNABASHEDLY SOBER PERSON ON THE COVER OF THIS MAGAZINE? ISN'T THE POINT OF THIS THING, LIKE, WRITING ABOUT THE CONSUMPTION OF BEER AND WEED?

Well, yes, that is a lot of the point. It is, for sure, our *raison d'être*. But “Beer & Weed” has always been about more than intoxication, in just the same way that consuming beer and weed ought to be. If you're just looking to get as fucked up as possible, I'm guessing you're not overly concerned with the flavor profile and the care and attention the product received in its small-batch creation (or whatever).

Rather, “beer and weed” has always for us been a bit of a metaphor for the experiences we have when consuming beer and weed — and lots of other things. It's about the places we go, the things we do, the company we keep. When we get to the top of the mountain, the beer we crack or the joint we light is as much about the celebration of accomplishment as it is about the feeling we want to achieve. When we're at the bar, the beer in our hand is as much a conversation piece and “thing to do” as it is a way to limber up a little bit and get the conversation flowing.

And “let's go have a safety meeting” has always been a great way to get someone to step outside with you for a slightly more intimate experience (side note: I had someone tell me recently that “are you a reader?” and/or “Let's go read a book” was Massachusetts code for “let's go smoke a joint,” and I am here for that).

So it's not surprising that a sober person like Brooke Binion might like to have a non-alcoholic beer at the bar with friends and not feel like she can't be part of the group. Sure, bars are places where you get a buzz on, but they're so much more than that. They're some of the last places where you can actually have happy accidents, stumbling across old friends and having memories triggered (whether they're good ones or not). Heck, they're some of the last places where you can meet new friends!

It would be sad to think non-drinkers did not have access to such places. Non-drinkers like to play pool and listen to music and talk shit, too, you know.

Nor should it need saying that “weed” encompasses

all manner of CBD products that offer real therapeutic benefits. Sober people need pain relief and methods for addressing anxiety and depression just like anyone else. Perhaps moreso.

In fact, the more I thought about putting Brooke on the cover, the more I liked the idea. She makes great music, full of lyrics that explore our tether to the world around us, and the album she releases with TheWorst this first week of June is an emotional journey that many will enjoy consuming — either alone or in a crowd — with a bit of beer and weed. And she has found a way to maintain a connection to that past life, to those people still living a life where intoxication plays a proper role, by appreciating the non-intoxicating offerings the craft brewing and growing worlds are beginning to embrace more whole-heartedly.

Non-alcoholic beer, as made by a place like Athletic or KITna, isn't just a weak approximation, but rather an attempt at an enjoyable experience in its own right. I actually tried it out, having a few KITna American Blondes while watching the Celtics game the other night. After the first few minutes, I didn't even remember it wasn't “real” beer. It provided everything I needed in terms of something to do with my nervousness and the comforting taste of watching sports with friends and family.

”

After the first few minutes, I didn't even remember it wasn't “real” beer.

As for CBD-only flower? That seems like a no-brainer to me. I love smoking joints, but most of the time I can only get a third of the way through this 20% THC stuff. Sometimes, you just want an excuse to go outside and shoot the shit, you know? I don't need to get more stoned while I'm doing it (and cigarettes are BAD — I have to remind myself; even after quitting 20 years ago, I still dream about them).

Like our magazine, beer and weed are for everyone.

 WORDS / **SAM PFEIFLE**
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



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MAINE DESIGNER TEAMS WITH ITALIAN BREWERY FOR UKRAINE RELIEF

As Finix Brewing's Zeke Maamouri-Cortez watched the invasion of Ukraine unfold from his little spot in the Italian Alps, he felt he had to do something to help the Ukrainians he saw suddenly fleeing for their lives, refugees with almost nothing to their names.

"I wanted to help people who were forced into a really shitty situation," he says. "Using the skillset I have as a brewer seemed to be the most logical way to provide support to people I don't know. So I thought, 'brew a beer for a good cause, raise more awareness, and give people an even better reason to drink beer.'"

So the former Mainer — he grew up in South Paris, toured Europe instead of UMaine and never came home — turned to Glen Halliday, CEO and founder of GHDesignCo, Creative Director here at Beer & Weed, and the man who's designed all of his cans so far, to design a can to match his newly crafted "СТІЙКІСТЬ" Wheat Ale. The title means "resilience" in Ukrainian, and Maamouri-Cortez says all proceeds from sales of the beer across Europe will be donated to Ukrainian refugee relief efforts.

"There are groups and people locally," he says, "who are collecting necessities and delivering them directly to Ukrainians in need, be it food, water, medical, clothing, shelter, whatever. Funds will help them do their job. It's killing two birds with one stone. The money stays in the local economy and helps Ukrainian people."

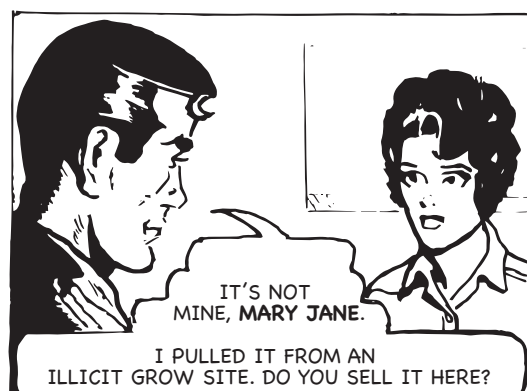
It's an example of the global nature of our society nowadays, where a little company

in Gorham, Maine, can team up with a little company in Italy to participate in the most important global efforts.

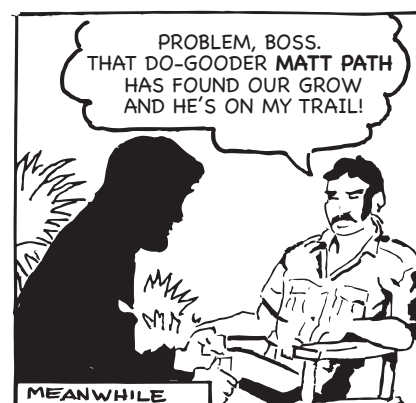
"I was just happy to get an opportunity to use my skills to help out a little bit," says Halliday. "Obviously, we can always send money somewhere. But the idea that my can design might attract attention on the shelves and get people to donate money just by drinking beer, that's pretty cool."



by Merrill Marsh



THIS JUST IN / WORDS / SAM PFEIFLE



DISTRIBUTION DISCOVERIES

EACH MONTH, OUR INTREPID DIRECTOR OF DISTRIBUTION, MARK SAYER, MAKES THE ROUNDS OF THE 150+ BREWERIES AND DISPENSARIES THAT MAKE UP OUR DISTRIBUTION PARTNERS. INEVITABLY, HE PARTAKES IN A VARIETY OF NEW PRODUCTS. BECAUSE WHY NOT? FEEL FREE TO OFFER SOMETHING UP FOR A TASTE TEST!



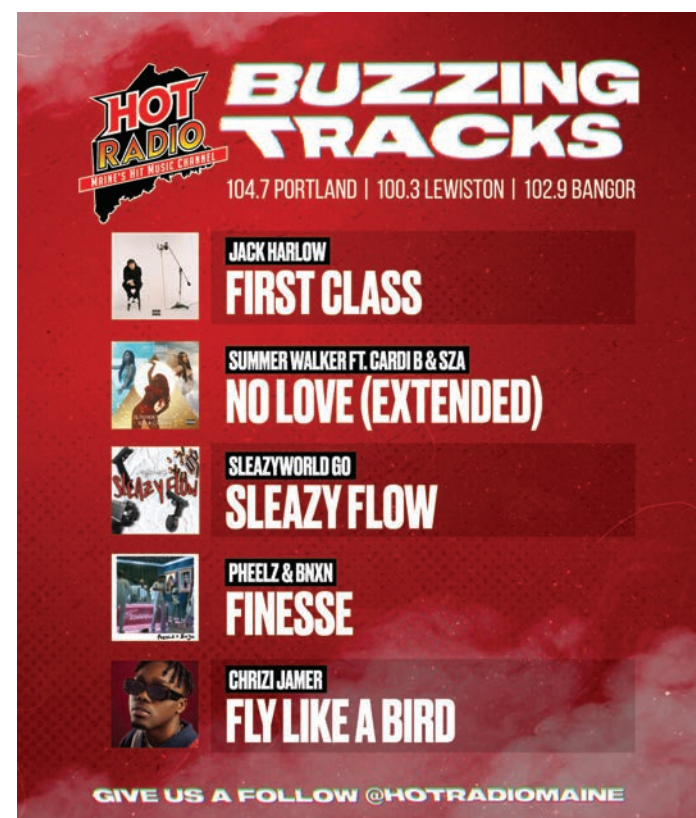
THIS MONTH HE REVIEWS CRUX CANNABIS LIVE ROSINS FROM ELEVATE MAINE, IN YARMOUTH:

My journey each month often takes me through towns I've never heard of or been to before, such as Etna and Mercer. What exactly was I doing in Mercer, Maine? Nothing. Absolutely fucking nothing. This story plays out over and over as I traverse the state, spreading the B&W gospel.

It's times like these when I thank whatever-deity-may-exist that Google Maps is a thing. I couldn't imagine the patience it would take to navigate this entire state, or at least the southern half of it, using just a map. I recall touring with my band in the '90s, well before the internet and Google were a thing. We had AAA map out our 12-state trip on paper maps called triptiks. Though they still exist (and you can still get them to highlight your routes on paper maps, all you masochists!), they've followed the modern trend of online maps and information, thank dog.

This month I was in search of live rosin (again). It's easily my favorite thing to smoke at this point, by a wide margin. The taste is so pure, and the non-use of solvents to extract means no other tastes are present. Though a bit more expensive than other types of concentrates, I find them well worth the extra coin.

My search led me to Elevate Maine in Yarmouth. I happened by on a Wednesday, when they were offering a "buy 2, get 1 free" deal on their house brand Crux Cannabis. I went for three Tier 1 rosins — the fruity and delicious sativa-leaning Tangie (aka Tangerine Kush); Candy Cream, a hybrid cross of Ice Cream Cake and Dayglow; and Beach Wedding, another hybrid mix of Wedding Cake and Tropicanna Cookies. Though all three were fantastic, being a sativa guy, I liked the Tangie the best. Whatever you're looking for, Elevate has a lot of great products and is worth a visit.



POT + PAN ENTERS THE REC MARKET

Folks who've got medical cards have known this for some time: Pot + Pan makes some tasty edibles. Now the Portland operation, headed up by chef Tara Cannaday, has entered the rec marketplace with a line of gummy bundts (think "jello mold desserts"), gummies, and chocolates. It's part of a trend in edibles — from Medible Delights to Squier's to Baked East — where chefs with serious food training are applying their skills to cannabis consumables.

"Whether it's the warm and fuzzy feeling you get biting into a freshly baked lemon bundt cake, or being transported back to afternoons at the diner counter laughing over a cherry lime bubbly drink," says Cannaday, "it's the smells, tastes and sounds that release our thoughts to joyfilled times. Add a dash of THC at your preferred dose, and wow, then we've made something truly special."

Pot + Pan is also conscious of bringing new people to cannabis and so has launched with 2.5mg portions of their Key Lime Pie gummy bundt and Red Ruby Grapefruit gummies, what they say is a first in Maine (and we haven't seen it yet), along with 5mg and 10mg portions of things like Sour Peach gummies and Peanut Butter Pie chocolate bars.

Look for them in rec shops like Highbrow, Sweet Dirt, MEDCo of Maine, and many more.

THE UNSUNG BARS OF PORTLAND



DO YOU EVER FEEL LIKE THE GROWING UBIQUITY OF CRAFT-BREWERY TASTING ROOMS MEANS NO ONE TALKS ABOUT GOOD BARS ANYMORE?

Granted, the pandemic ruined bars a little for us, at least perception-wise. All the things that used to make the best bars

great — their intimate layouts and fun, crowded nights — are the opposite of what you want to do when there's contagion afoot. While much ado was made about breweries and restaurants getting new ad-hoc outdoor dining spaces during this period, some bars never got that chance due to their size, license type, or simply bad luck of a location.

As I am knocking on the biggest piece of wood I can get ahold of, though, it seems as if we're emerging from the worst of what's defined our daily lives in the last few years, and I want to take a moment to celebrate some of my go-tos in Portland and explore a little bit about what makes them special.

First, the obvious: I won't waste column inches detailing the awesomeness of Novare Res Bier Cafe. Just go, if you haven't.

Instead, let's talk about a few bars that are close to my heart but a little bit more under the radar. The first that comes to mind is Maps, on what I always call the "back side of Exchange Street," but is really Market Street; it's just one of those places you can walk into and feel like you're somewhere else. Decorated with a theme of vintage maps, but in a way that somehow does not feel kitschy, the low-ceilinged, subterranean, tiny bar just always has an enticing energy. On a breezy summer night, it's perfect, and I never care what's on tap particularly (their selection of craft is well-selected and rotates frequently). The music playing is always the right volume, the right mood, the right era. It's where I end up when I need a change of vibe.

Another bar that feels other-worldly is Bramhall, with its built-in brick nooks and grottos, candlelight, and an atrocious lack of cellular data signal that forces you to either sit in solitude and make grandiose plans in your head or to converse with your friends (or strangers). It's paradise, honestly, if you're hiding from reality or just need a break from the never-ending stream of news. I spent election night 2016 there, and it felt like the world could end outside and I'd be unaware, beer or whiskey in hand.

For nights where I'm feeling the opposite, and am leaning towards the gregarious, fun, and random, I usually find myself

wandering to The Portland Zoo. I'd argue that The Zoo is as close to emulating the feel of a European "beer garden" as I've seen in the city, albeit without any of the German trappings. You order your beer from a small bar "inside" (read: in a shed, basically), and then take it to sit either at picnic tables, barrels, or something else to lean on, under a roof or the stars, your choice. There's something just freeing about The Zoo, like no one cares about anything but having a laugh. It's a place where I feel no pressure to be any certain way — and those places are becoming quite rare.

I've never been a fan of the phrase "dive bar" because it implies a kind of icky feeling of encouraging someone to visit a place that's below their stature — as if you're on an anthropological tour or visiting a museum. I know Andy's Old Port Pub repeatedly makes it onto "dive bar" lists, but putting them there does a disservice to what Andy's really is. Andy's was Portland before Portland became, well, whatever it's becoming now. There's a lot on tap, and the place is big enough so you can have an intimate conversation in a corner or bring a bunch of friends in a group, with no pretense in sight. The decor's a little dated, the clientele is older-skewed in age, but the prices are more than reasonable, the beer is good, and I've never once regretted walking in.

”

I've never been a fan of the phrase "dive bar" because it implies a kind of icky feeling of encouraging someone to visit a place that's below their stature.

I know that's just a small slice of what it's like to be a beer drinker in Portland, but I wanted to share some of the places that light me up with a little bit of joy whenever I step over the threshold. Hopefully, you've got your own favorites — and maybe I'll see you there. Cheers.



WORDS / **BEER BABE**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER



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PHOTOS / **MATTHEW ROBBINS**

CHEERS TO REGRETS

**BROOKE BINION OF
THEWORST TALKS DOGS,
THE NEW ALBUM, SOBRIETY,
AND BEING SEEN**

happen to have on tap where she's sitting. "At Geno's [in Portland], they have this Woodland Farms Ruby," she says of her discovery that some of these non-alcoholic beers were not utter crap. "People were like, 'You should try this!'" Of course, she was skeptical. But then a friend bought her one and the raspberry sour was not just delicious but ... comforting.

"You feel like you're there with them," Binion says, "doing the same thing and having the same experience."

That personal connection, that interaction with the world around her, is vital to Binion's songwriting, fully on display for the brand-new "Yes Regrets," which features a chronological series of songs that show her coming out of recovery and into herself.

"The first two or three songs I was still using and drinking, and I can hear it in them," she says. "And then I was realizing that all my problems weren't solved just because I was clean." On the cover of the album, we see a two-headed wolf, an image that returns in the video for "Hurt Forever," as an institutionalized Binion scribbles it out on a piece of paper on the floor, a symbol of Binion's warring emotions.

"I'm extremely bipolar," she says, "and I feel like it's a very bipolar record. It's a manic wolf and a depressive wolf. I've sort of been obsessed with that idea since I started working with dogs. I really like it."

That's right: dogs. A connection with them is important, too. In combination with a commitment to meditation and self-examination, Binion has found training dogs with behavior issues to have a calming and centering effect.

"Honestly, I can totally see my addiction and that part of my brain being transferred," she says. "I work with hard-to-deal-with dogs and I'm just addicted to buying dog treats, freeze-dried liver. It's the first thing I do when I get my paycheck is buy some liver like a psycho. I can tell it's that same mechanism."

Binion values that primal interaction that dogs offer, something she can't quite find with a human partner and isn't necessarily something she can put into words. It's about companionship. The kind of unrequited love she details in the dynamic "Black Dog Waltz," where "I will go gently if you'll stay with me." She is plaintive, tortured, and her guitar sings out with feedback like the best of the late-'90s Riot Grrrl bands and their male counterparts in Nirvana and Temple of the Dog.

Plus, the dogs never lie to her, like even her own brain can do so often. "I had a really big manic streak," she remembers, "and that's when I thought everything I did was amazing. I was just like barely alive and I was like, 'This is amazing!.' And then on the flip side, there was severe depression when I couldn't get out of bed for weeks, and those are polar opposite things that exist at the same

Two years into sobriety, Brooke Binion still likes going to bars.

"When I was going through treatment," she says, "they were like, 'You're going to have to get all new friends. Go to all new places.' And I was like, 'I like my friends. I don't want everything to be completely different. I just don't want to be a mess.'"

Fronting the grunge-rock band TheWorst, and like just about everyone else in the music scene, Binion has spent much of her life in bars, from playing gigs to doing sound to finding something to do until one in the morning, which is when musicians tend to start thinking about hitting the sack. "Most of my friends are drinking responsibly and they like to go to bars," she reasons, "and I like running into people that you haven't seen. But I get a little restless if I'm just sitting there and they're feeling better and better."

That's why she's thankful for the new non-alcoholic craft beer trend, whether Portland's brand-new KITna or whatever they

◀ FROM PAGE 11

time. So, I feel like I can't always trust myself. There's a mistrust of my brain that ebbs and flows and I hear that journey in the songs."

Or, as she puts it in the album's stellar title track, "no contrition; just a couple of mental conditions."

While there is much wider acceptance of mental health's importance today than in years past, and it can be easier to talk about it, there's also been something of a rejiggering of the way rock stars — and Binion is every inch a rock star — are consumed by the general public. The messy days of Johnny Rotten and Iggy Pop seem to have been left behind in the Instagram age. Heck, Iggy's doing cruise ship commercials nowadays, isn't he?

Binion on "Yes Regrets" offers no apologies for letting it all hang out, alternately fierce and hurt, brutal and careful. While the record is made for maxing out in the car, it's live where TheWorst make their bones, with Binion backed by long-time scene veterans Craig Sala (Paranoid Social Club, Planeside, etc.) on drums and Will Bradford (Seepeoples) on bass. She is electric in black and white, a crash of hair across her face and nervous energy. And while she says it's not cathartic for her, it ought to be for you, as everything she's got pours through you.

"That's how I make it through shows," she says. "It's channeling emotion. Otherwise it would feel like a mess of self-consciousness."

And like so many artists of her ilk, she says she doesn't write her songs because she wants to or she loves doing it. Rather, she feels like she doesn't have much choice in the matter. And if she's going to feel that compulsion, she might as well do it well:

"You have to be careful," she reasons. "Otherwise you just feel like, 'Damn, I have to say this stupid shit every night.' But I think I've avoided that."



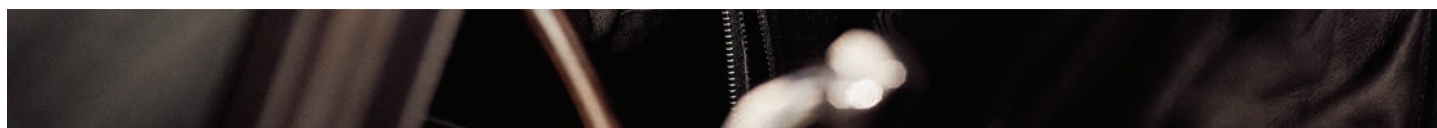
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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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DON'T HATE THE FIZZ

HOW APRÈS DRINKS IS BRINGING TIME-TESTED BREWING TRADITIONS TO CRAFT SELTZER

WORDS / CALEB JAGODA
PHOTOS / ALYSSA DOUST

Surely, you've seen those "hard seltzers" around, even if you despise them; you are reading Beer & Weed, after all, not Seltzer & Menthols, so you may just harbor a certain disdain for those fizzy spiked bevs. And why not? They seem pretty elementary. Sugar, water, yeast, and another heaping amount of sugar, right? Might as well package them in a juice pouch. But as it turns out, a lot of these bubbly-water guys used to be doubters, too, and if you dig beneath the surface even the tiniest bit, there's a whole lot of depth and dexterity that goes into their creation.

"A year and a half ago, you would've heard me talking shit on seltzers," says Ian Goering, who cut his teeth at a small myriad of venerable New England breweries. "And you would've said, 'Well, Ian, how many have you had?' And I would have replied, 'Well, none, but I know they're no good!'"

Today Goering is a converted man. As head of production at Après Drinks in Portland — an establishment that exclusively offers hard seltzers and ciders — he's one of the chief minds

behind a mission that doesn't feature a drop of beer in sight. And to think only a few years before he was a self-described "curmudgeon German beer guy."

"I figured I should just quit my bitching and say, 'Alright, well this is the way that I would do it.'"

Talking to Goering at the bar in their tasting room — which is a sprawling space, with an eccentric warmth and clean, rustic vibe — I learn that he was far from alone in his seltzer doubts. He tells me that his whole team at Après comes from the beer world and that, to some extent, they were all pretty skeptical of seltzer. But that quickly faded once they realized the experimental freedom to be found in the fizz — beer style guidelines be damned.

"Now I have some 'I can do anything under the sun' moments," Goering tells me. "Like I can really do any flavors that I want, which has been eye-opening for me. I've learned a lot about food science and balancing flavors that I'm not saying I wouldn't have gotten out of beer, but I think I've had an accelerated pace here."



At breweries like Bull Jagger and Northwoods, and then in five years working with brewing legend and notorious beer purist Tod Mott at Tributary Brewing Company in Kittery (see "Calling Ben Franklin," in the May 2022 issue of B&W), Goering honed many of the skills that would be directly transferable to seltzer — which, he explains, are more abundant than one may think. The cellarmanship between the two are nearly identical, along with all the numbers and ratios that accompany recipe construction (all the very acidic, above-the-shoulders, mustard shit, as Matthew McConaughey would say).

"The thing is, best practices are best practices, regardless of what you're making," he says. "I like to think that if you can do beer, you can probably do any beverage — so when you look at it that way, seltzer's quite a bit easier than beer to make. I would say the challenges are in how delicate it is, because there's not a lot of room for error in these. You can't really cover up any mistakes; everything's kinda out there in the open."

Goering explains that unlike beer, there are no "hints of" — if a seltzer is flavored with, say, strawberries and clementines, real

strawberries and clementines are fermented down, and you taste strawberries and clementines as the main flavors. But this isn't how every seltzer-maker creates their beverages, and it's one of the things that makes Après' approach pretty unique. While some seltzers are made with sugar and fruit syrups, Après places an emphasis on fresh, local ingredients, from Maine blueberries to honey sourced from the same farm where they ferment their apples.

"That's definitely one of those lessons that Tod down at Tributary taught me," Goering says. "When we made pumpkin ale, there were real pumpkins going into that; blueberry ale gets real blueberries going into it. We weren't gonna use anything artificial or none of that — you're using the real thing that it is. I was talking to a lot of my chef friends about this, and I came to the same conclusion everybody that makes food does: Use fresh, local ingredients as often as possible, and apparently it works here, too, for this."

And Goering's ideology doesn't stop with their ingredients selection: He and Après elect to use the rectification process to make their seltzers, something that's relatively rare in today's market. While many breweries only have a brewing license and ferment their seltzers (making a pseudo-seltzer that's legally considered a beer), Après has a distillation license and works with a base alcohol that comes from cane sugar (see "Is it Seltzer, or is it Beer?," page 16).

"I can do anything but beer," Goering chuckles. "I feel like I'm in art school again where it's like, you can do anything you want except for that thing you always do."

As Goering talks, taking me through the ins and outs of the seltzer world, he consistently brings up the word "balance," and it's easy to see why. Everything at Après seems like it's striving for balance: the design of the cans, with their crisp color-block patterns; the seltzer flavors, harmonizing herbal and fruit components; and even Goering himself, deeply insightful about the smallest details of the craft but also articulate and affable in a way that makes the afternoon breeze by and feel more like shooting the shit over a few drinks than an interview and pedagogical lesson on craft drinks.

"Balance means a lot of different things to different people," he says, "but I think you have to look at all aspects. It needs to be approachable but interesting; it needs to be simple but complex and nuanced; it needs to be not too sweet, not too bitter, not too sour, getting all of those things in balance."

That balance shows equally in each sip of a specific flavor as it does in the variety of flavors Après features on tap. Goering says their philosophy for flavor is to offer something for everyone, hitting four specific flavor profiles (along with whatever else they may be enjoying at the time): something citrusy, something fruity with berries, something incorporating tea, and something playing off a classic cocktail.

◀ FROM PAGE 15

Throughout our conversation I can't help but notice the 10 flavors dangling behind Goering's head on rectangular blackboards, the list of Après' current offerings on tap. Among them are the Schraeder, a watermelon and sea-salt seltzer that's a tribute to Gose (the German beer style); the Switchel, a New England spin on the classic cocktail with apple cider vinegar and maple syrup; and the Seven Majors, Goering's craft version of an Arnold Palmer utilizing old growth Chinese black tea and fresh-squeezed lemons. And no matter which of these styles Goering is creating, he makes sure his head and his heart are in the right space before doing so.

"I always think of Bear, the guy that made the acid for the Grateful Dead," he says. "He was rumored to throw away entire batches if he wasn't in a good mood when he made it, because he thought that his bad vibes would basically go into that and go out. I think there's something to that. ... Grandma's cooking was made with that bit of love and care, and that's why, even though I've got her recipe, it'll never be as good as the way she cooked it."

Like the best brewers — like any good craft artisan — Goering wants to make a product that he's proud of, that he can stand by no matter who's tasting it, and that doesn't need an intense explanation to go along with it.



"I always like to think of intent," he says. "What was your intent of making that seltzer? Was it just that you needed an alternative line, you needed an alternative product to reach out to some new demographics in your tap room? Is it that you're trying to capitalize on a fast-growing segment of the market? Don't tell my bosses this, but I don't care about that stuff. I just care about being able to give these to my fishing buddies, and giving them to my staunchest of brewer friends, and everybody enjoying them equally. The people that are going to sit there and sniff it and talk about all the different nuances, I want it to stand up to their scrutiny. But I also just want my fishing buddies to slam these on their boats and have a great time."

 WORDS / CALEB JAGODA
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

IS IT SELTZER, OR IS IT BEER?

On the surface, seltzer seems like a pretty hard thing to fuck up; it's only a handful of ingredients, and there's no strict style guidelines to follow, like with beer. But that doesn't mean there aren't different methods to the madness, and different ways to make seltzer more like — well, seltzer. Enter the most contentious topic in craft seltzer: rectification versus fermentation.

When hard seltzers first became all the rage, a lot of breweries made the decision to keep up with the Joneses and feature a seltzer on tap. But the thing is, most breweries don't have a distilling license, only a license to brew beer. These breweries typically use fermentation when making their seltzer, and as anyone who's tasted a seltzer knows, they're not supposed to taste ferment-y. Thus, all the fermentation flavors from the drink have to be removed towards the back end of the process.

"Legally, you've gotta do some things to call it beer because that's what your license is," Goering says of seltzers made using the fermentation process, "but then you're trying to sell this thing as a seltzer and it's not really a seltzer, nor is it a beer. It's kinda its own thing and it's not really either of the things. So that just kinda seemed weird to me."

On the other side stands the rectification process, where the seltzer is made as a spirit in a carbonated water, with the distillation process taking out any fermentation flavors that come from the fruit. Après decided to use rectification from the get-go and utilize a "neutral grain spirit" quadruple-distilled down from cane sugar for their base alcohol.

"My main skepticism is that I saw a lot of breweries starting to make seltzer and it didn't feel as if that was something that was being done for anything other than a financial purpose," Goering says. "I can't speak for any other breweries or their motivations, but it was just like, everybody's making IPAs, now everybody's making seltzers, and it just seemed like the new trend that everybody was jumping on. ... I was skeptical of the motivations why seltzer was being made."



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**BOOZE IN AN EDIBLE:
CAN YOU DO THAT?**

WORDS / SAM PFEIFLE

What's most important when creating a new cannabis edible using whiskey as a key ingredient?

Perhaps counterintuitively, “the first consideration is always that there isn't any residual alcohol,” says Jeffrey Page, head of edible production at Littlefield Confections. “We've all had those moments where you're mixing alcohol with cannabis and it elevates the effect. And it's really hard to control that effect. So we make sure to cook off all the alcohol in the process.”

So, yeah, there's no booze in Littlefield's brand-new Whiskey Caramels. None of the regulators are going to allow that (just like there's no THC, or even CBD, in that terpene-infused beer that Bissell Brothers puts out with Mentation Cannabis every 4/20 now).

“As a spirits manufacturer,” says Luke Davidson, founder of Maine Craft Distilling, “the idea of edibles has been so far from my mind. In this building, the feds are very much involved with our lives and any kind of cannabis product and alcohol is a no-no in my world.”

But Littlefield had an idea that Maine Craft's signature 50 Stone Whiskey would taste absolutely delicious in a caramel, so they did the research: The Office of Marijuana Policy and Maine Bureau of Alcoholic Beverages and Lottery Operations both agreed that as long as there's no actual booze in the edibles, they could have at it.

That left Page with consideration number two: “Making sure that the flavor profile is maintained and isn't lost with the cooking off process.”

Essentially, it happens at the end. The caramel is largely mixed and then Page brings the concoction up to 244 degrees on the stove — “nothing lower, nothing higher” — and then adds the whiskey, keeping it at 244 until he's confident the alcohol has burned off. “Then I take it off the heat,” he says, “put the full spectrum in it, and then a couple of other vanilla flavorings, and we're good to go. Oh, also the smoked Maine sea salt from the Maine Sea Salt Company.”

TO PAGE 20 ►



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◀ FROM PAGE 18

Davidson pipes in: “It was really great that you decided to use smoked sea salt,” he says, “and we have smoked seaweed.”

Smoked seaweed? Well, yes. Maine Craft Distilling smokes their grain by burning seaweed. “It’s a traditional Scottish thing,” says Davidson. “They use peat and commonly that ocean peat has seaweed in it, just by being on the shores of Scotland. We just use regular rock weed. And we use Maine peat as well.”

“That smoke and that peat profile,” he says, “works really well with caramel, so it’s really genius.”

The 50 Stone is known for its full body, aged in oak barrels for four years, getting its name from the 50 stones (a “stone” weighs about 14 pounds thanks to a decision by the King of England in 1389 because obviously) of grain that’s necessary to make a single barrel of the whiskey. “It’s basically the most traditional method and style you can get in a whiskey,” Davidson says.

And that attracted Page. “It makes me feel kind of warm and toasty,” he says, “even just smelling it. It’s very familiar, very warm, and I want to feel that way with everything I make, as far as chocolates and caramels. That’s the feeling I want you to have when you eat that product.”

That’s true of the CO2-extracted “fuller spectrum” cannabis with which they infuse the edibles, as well. The extract comes from HighTech Labs in Biddeford, which uses what they call “supercritical CO2 extraction” to separate out the various cannabinoids in a plant and custom adjust the amounts of each in the extract they provide to customers like Littlefield. The solventless process is also designed to preserve the terpene profile of the original cannabis.

“You have 8-10 cannabinoids as opposed to 4-5,” says Page. “You get a lot more cannabis profile. It’s very well rounded. That’s how I like to describe it.”

Davidson doesn’t know about all that, but has been watching the cannabis market closely as someone who was part of the new distillery movement that has sprung up in Maine recently. “Chocolate and whiskey, they’re old friends,” he says. “There’s some kind of old traditional feeling that comes up when you drink whiskey and eat chocolate and adding a different experience to that flavor is a unique concept. You replace the experience, but you keep the flavor.”

 WORDS / **SAM PFEIFLE**
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

SO, HOW ARE THEY?

This reviewer got an early preview of the caramels, in temporary packaging, and tried 5mg and 10mg portions over the course of a couple of days.

For sure, the whiskey flavor is there, but it’s not high in the flavor profile, as though you just washed the caramel down with a shooter. Rather, it’s a smokey-sweet ambiance, giving way to the sugary-sweet and milky after-taste. The consistency is the real winner, a velvety experience, melting away as you suck on it, with none of the hardness or tackiness that some cheap caramel delivers.

As for the buzz, the “fuller spectrum” experience is real, a buzz that starts in your stomach and glows through the tips of your fingers. Everyone’s tolerance will be different, but 5mg was a just-noticeable warmth, while 10mg delivered that feeling where every 10 minutes you think, “oh, right, I’m stoned.”

If you’re eating straight-THC edibles, give these a try and compare the experience. You probably won’t go back.



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GROWING SEASON

FERTILIZE, WATER, AND LET THE SUN DO ITS WORK

JUNE'S SUMMER ENERGY OFFERS BLOOMS OF ESSENTIALITY FOR SENTIENT BEINGS. SUMMER SOLSTICE, THE LONGEST GROWING-OUTRAGEOUS-WEED DAY OF THE YEAR, OCCURS ON TUESDAY JUNE 21, 2022 AT 05:14 IN THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE.

On the solstice, the sun is directly over the Tropic of Cancer — specifically, right at 23.5 degrees north latitude. The sun reaches its highest and northernmost point in the sky, marking the start of Midsummer, when the Northern Hemisphere receives sunlight at the most direct angle from the sun. This is the month when your cannabis plant's growth will amaze you!

Practice to prosper, right in your backyard, knowing there is high potential for an amazing harvest following the days of summer. Celebrate the Summer Solstice with a rhythm of Surya Namaskar (sun salutations), celebrating the vegetative process. Wear orange and yellow flower crowns (or T-shirts). Pack a picnic lunch with last season's outrageous flower. Go for a swim and sunbathe!

Or, if it's a workday for you, enjoy dinner outdoors, enhanced with your carefully crafted organic weed, making a bonfire while you stargaze and moonbathe. Acknowledging the life force energy within us and our appreciation for the sun's warmth — which provides the light necessary for our dreamy weed plants to thrive and prosper — seems only fitting.

Turning sunshine into energy is the process of photosynthesis in plant life. In the growing season of summer, sunshine brings a blue spectrum of light. This short wave radiation of ultraviolet light encourages plants to grow an abundance of healthy leaves. This is called the vegetative stage. Cannabis plants have plentiful amounts of chlorophyll in their leaves. These cannabis leaves (aka fan leaves) are the solar panels and lungs of your plant. Healthy fan and sugar leaves support and establish your flowers to be.

Sunshine, carbon dioxide, and water create carbohydrates that will transport sugars throughout your cannabis plant. This is the support system for high-quality weed. Flowers absorb sugars; the higher the sugar content, the greater the THC substance.

This magical network welcomes your support. Encouraging optimal growth with plenty of compost/manure/earthworms, working the

soil so it is porous and able to absorb moisture, creates the best growing environment for your plant roots.

Knowing you have healthy soil (since you followed my advice from the last couple of months), you just need to replace the nutrients that the plants use up. Scratching the soil surface with a handy-dandy tool to mix the fertilizer into the soil aerates your soil and keeps bacteria from growing into mold during the hot and humid season. Be sure to have 3" of soil covering the roots, keeping that cup-and-saucer vision to support the water and nutrient applications. Be careful to keep the fertilizer off the plants' roots and the surface of the stalk and leaves, as it will burn them.

While you're getting down in the dirt, caring for your cannabis, spend some time weeding. Hopefully you utilized nasturtiums or sweetpeas as a companion cover crop; they are an amazing barrier for unwanted weeds and save you an immense amount of time and they definitely protect the soil microbes. It's not too late to plant more of them.

Utilizing Pro-Gro 5-3-4 compost sun tea during this vegetative time is important to supply the root system with just the right amounts of nitrogen, phosphate, and potassium. Heavy direct application of fertilizer can burn the roots. Take it easy! Mindfulness is important in growing outrageous weed outdoors.

During June's vegetative stage, it's good protocol to administer about a quarter of a five-gallon bucket of Pro-Gro 5-3-4/manure compost sun tea once a week. Early morning watering is best, so sunshine throughout the day can protect from mold or fungus growth.

Factor heat and wind into the discretion of how much to water — hot and dry weather ramps up the need for water. The leaves will indicate how the plant is faring. If you notice drooping/curling leaves, like the plant is sucking in on itself, the plant needs more water. Over-watering can be just as detrimental as underwatering. When you overwater, you can stunt the sugar production by drowning the oxygen levels in the root system that transport sugars to the flower development. This can cause drooping, too! But also watch out for brown tips and edges, or spotting on the leaves.



Growers understand that hand watering is more efficient than sprinklers. Best of all is investing in a non-toxic soaker hose that saves water and time and which directly soaks the root system.

How well your soil drains will give you a good understanding of how to water your plants. You can do a soil percolation test (perk test) by digging a hole 12" deep and 12" in diameter. Fill the hole with water and let sit overnight. The next day, refill the hole with water. Measure the water level by laying a stick across the hole and then use a tape measure to determine the water level. Continue to measure the water level every hour until the hole is empty, noting the inches the water level dropped per hour. 1"-3" is okay for garden plants. If the rate is 1" or less per hour, that means the water drains too slowly. If the drainage is 4" or more per hour, it's too fast.

Regardless of too slow or too fast, mixing in more compost and organic matter is the answer. See: Compost is a win, win.

This month, your plant is strengthening the stalk, stem, and root system. Feeding her nutrients will boost her growth of vegetation, which will turn to dense, aromatic flowers. Continue to feed your weed plant during the vegetative phase, usually until the 4th of July. It really depends on the development of your plant when to cut back on the amount (save the roots) of fertilizing. As we approach the flowering stage, we will increase the potash (potassium) with Pro-Gro 5-3-9.

Note: If you are wondering whether or not to prune your cannabis plants, look back to my June 2021 column in B&W; it has step-by-step suggestions of different techniques.

Remember to periodically check the front and back of the leaves for any sign of pest damage. Not all insects are trouble in the backyard garden. There are most definitely beneficial ones! Be discerning and keep notes. Take pictures. Rodale's Organic Gardener's Handbook of Natural Insect and Disease Control is a good investment.

Enjoy your summertime and keep on practicing the craft of growing an abundance of outrageous organic weed in your backyard gardens!



WORDS / DIRT DIVA
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

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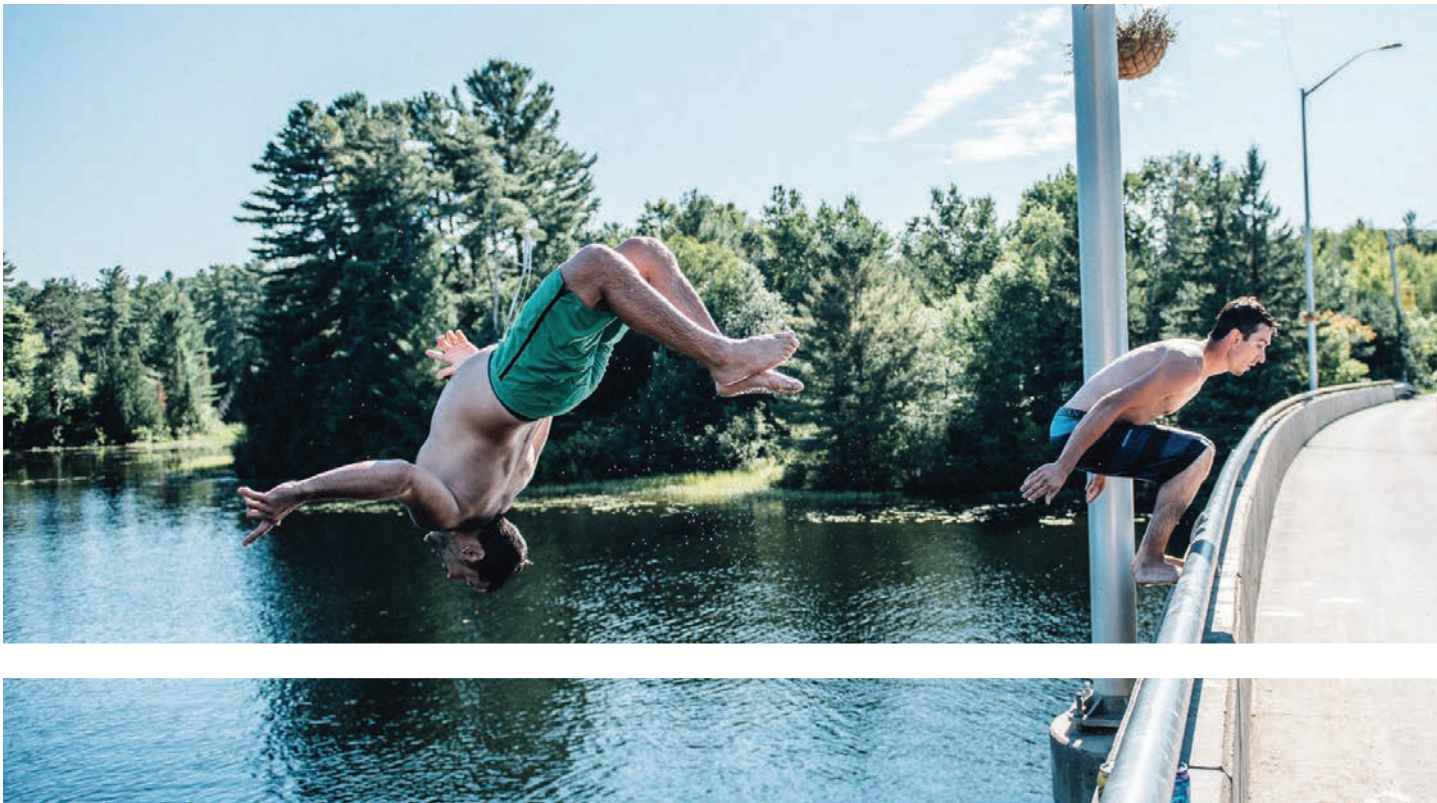
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GO JUMP OFF A BRIDGE

WHERE TO GO TO COOL DOWN FROM ON HIGH

WORDS / CYNDLE PLAISTED RIALS



We've got a lot of water in Maine, and subsequently, quite a few bridges. Nearly 2,500 to be exact. And on any lazy summer day, as you're drifting along down a quiet back road, you'll probably see kids and adults alike lining one of those small town bridges, some nerving themselves up to make their first jump, egged on by their supportive or teasing friends, and others dripping, grinning, and eager to take their next turn to plummet off the edge into the chilly water below.

I've never been able to muster the courage to take that leap myself, though I have climbed to the other side of the guardrail at the bridge on Shore Road in Cape Neddick, my toes curled over the ledge, and looked down into the swirling green water of the York River below. I never went to the bridge until I was an adult, and I think by then I had collected too much fear of maybes and what-ifs, worries that crippled me when I peered down at the water's surface. My younger cousins are daredevils, though, fearless, and they cannonball, flip, dive, anything to add an additional thrill to the drop. I've tried a few times, but I can't seem to let go, to fall, to let the water swallow me for a moment before I pop up drenched and smiling the way the rest of them do. Every time I climb back over the railing, I feel faintly let down by myself, unable to join my family in this bonding ritual.

Tristen Lilly has probably never known that disappointment. The 20-year-old dynamo is a K2-sponsored freeride skier and certified thrill-seeker, and though he now spends a lot of his time in Utah, where the ski season extends much longer than ours does, he grew up in Bethel, right near Sunday River.

He's jumped off tons of Maine bridges and cliffs over the years, and his first cliff jump is etched into his memory: "We'd go to Frenchman's [Frenchman's Hole, in Newry] and jump off there; I was probably like eight, or seven. That's like 25 feet into the water. I actually remember doing that the first time. It's super vivid actually. I just remember being in the air, and it was just like everything was in slow motion, like the world just stopped around me."

The idea of such peace and stillness in the middle of a long drop through the air is hard to fathom, but I can't argue with it. "I honestly think that's why I love the skiing and jumping and all that stuff so much, and that thrill," Lilly says, "it's almost like a meditation form. You're not thinking. You don't have to think, your body just does it. My brain doesn't think a single thought the entire way down. Just trying to go as fast as I can, just getting into the flow."

We can't talk about bridge jumping without acknowledging that there have been a few high-profile injuries and even deaths associated with the pastime. These are largely related to kids being hit by vehicles while jumping on bridges with high roadway speeds, or insufficient verification of the depth of the water. But there are so many bridges in this state where the water is plenty deep, and the only cars that will pass will be moseying along on a Sunday drive.

I asked Lilly if he ever got hurt on a bridge jump. "On a jump? Never hurt myself jumping, but I jumped off the 103 [bridge] with

◀ FROM PAGE 25

a broken ankle once,” he laughs. “I was on crutches ... it was almost healed, but I wasn’t supposed to be walking yet. I just crutched up to the bridge and jumped off, and then someone brought my crutches down to the water for me. It wasn’t the smartest idea – it definitely hurt. People thought I was crazy for that.”

But who was he to deny the call of the water below?

He says the key to a good jump is trust: “Trust that the water’s gonna be deep enough, that I can keep my body upright. And all that kinda originates from watching other people do it, you see they can do it; and once you do it once, you see that you can do it every time.”

So maybe your body is ready for the plunge, but you want to know: “Is it legal?” And pretty much, yeah. It is. The laws vary by municipality, and obviously bridges with extra-long drops, ripping currents, or those traversed by high-speed, high-traffic roads are a no-no. But otherwise, unless they’re posted with signs, the rest seem to be fair game. I even saw a post on the York Beach Fire & Rescue Facebook page once waxing nostalgic about the refreshing pleasures of jumping from various bridges in town into the York River.

And that nostalgia is a lot of what keeps bridge jumping alive and well, I think. In looking for some folks to talk to for this feature, I started a Reddit thread on r/Maine asking for people’s experiences with bridge jumping. The first commenter was incredulous this even happened in the state, and, clearly thinking I was “from away,” assured me I was not going to find a single Mainer who did such a thing.

But other commenters drifted back into their memories of summer days long past, recalling those long, humid afternoons and their own youthful fearlessness. One woman reminisced: “Bridge jumping takes me back to being 16 and jumping off the bridge on the 10th Mountain Division Trail in Windham to impress the boys.”

Another spoke of days spent white water kayaking under the Blue Hill Falls Bridge, where he and his friends would stop to jump off the span at high tide. This is a particularly valuable memory, as the Falls Bridge is in the process of being rebuilt. The original bridge, which is nearly a hundred years old and is one of only a few remaining reinforced concrete tied thru arch bridges in Maine, was recently declared by the MDOT to be in need of major reconstruction or replacement. The rendering of the proposed replacement bridge is a solid, white, modern block of a thing, with the vision of the sun’s rays piercing through its spoked arches fading into distant memory.

So if you find yourself sitting and sweating on a summer day, wondering what you might do to fill the stretched and sweltering hours of the afternoon, perhaps in need of recapturing just one

sun-drenched taste of days gone by, or looking for that sweet moment of meditation Tristen Lilly described, might we (non-liably) suggest you go jump off a bridge? Here are a few we hear are very much worth checking out, along with some fantastic breweries and dispensaries to enjoy along the way.

103 BRIDGE
Route 103, York Harbor

Just off Route 1A in York Harbor is the 103 Bridge, which at high tide offers somewhere around a 25-30 foot drop into the York River. While you’re there, you can check out the world’s shortest suspension bridge, the Wiggly, which abuts a tidal pool created by early colonists who built a dam there to power a nearby sawmill and gristmill.

SoMe Brewing Co.
1 York St #3, York
207-351-8162
<http://www.somebrewingco.com/>

Tucked into the back of a multi-business building right off Route 1, SoMe is a great spot with indoor and outdoor seating, and a great roster of beers, in tons of styles. Particularly worth checking out are the stouts – every time people hear about the Peanut Butter Whoopie Pie Stout, their mouths water, and for good reason. They also just recently started their Cabin Club, a mug club with all kinds of sweet perks.

Southern Maine Apothecary [Medical]
114 State Road, Kittery
207-219-4432
<https://www.smapothecary.com/>

Just a hop, skip, and a jump down Rt. 1 into Kittery, this quaint newly-opened shop is staffed by lovely people. One can hardly believe the sheer volume of menu items can all fit into their adorable building, but they have a wide range of flower and tons of edibles, from drinks to gummies to chocolate bars, including one that boasts 1000mg of THC.

BABBS COVERED BRIDGE
Hurricane Rd, Gorham

The original bridge that stood for over a century in this spot over the Presumpscott River was destroyed by a fire in the ’70s, and Babbs Bridge, a replica of the original, was built in its place. One extra special thing about this spot is that there’s a swimming hole under the bridge, plus rope swings from trees on the bank. A cool spot to cool off.

Lone Pine Brewing Company
48 Sanford Dr., Gorham
207-591-0096
<http://lonepinebrewery.com/gorham-tasting-room/>

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◀ FROM PAGE 27

If you've only been to the Portland location, you're missing out. Here in Gorham you've got room to stretch out, with a great outdoor seating area that can fill up in a hurry (make sure to leave some time to wait for a table to open). Last time we were there, they had 11 varieties on tap, plus another 19 can pours available. Not too shabby.

Kind & Co. [Medical]

15 Heathwood Dr., Windham
207-572-1086
<https://www.kindand.co/>

Windham is among the greenest towns in Maine, with what seems like another weed shop popping up once a week, but Kind & Co. are among the local OGs and are always worth a stop when you're in the area. Walking, you might be forgiven for thinking it's a clothing shop, as there are always new fits, but their cannabis is as strong as their style.

NEZINSCOT RIVER BRIDGE

North Parish Rd, Turner

Early on in Turner's history, the Nezinscot River played an important role in its development, supplying water power to many of the town's nearby mills. Locals say the water here is deep enough that they've never touched the bottom when jumping, and the river is also a great spot for fishing, canoeing, and kayaking.

Ricker Hill Cidery

11 Ricker Hill Rd., Turner
207-225-6165
<https://www.rickershardcider.com/>

There aren't quite as many cideries as there are breweries in Maine, so take advantage of your proximity here and stop in. Later in the year, the pick-your-own situation is one of the best in Maine, with all kinds of things for the kids to do, but you can find one of the best selections of local cider here year-round.

CWorx & Company [Medical]

964 Auburn Road, Turner
207-312-3128
<https://cworx.co/>

Amongst a stretch where you've got a lot of options, CWorx stands out for a stylish storefront and a big selection of organically grown house flower, with plenty of interesting strains. You'll also find some interesting concentrates, reasonably priced, from batter to sugar wax to diamonds and moon rocks.



TO PAGE 30 ▶

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◀ FROM PAGE 29

BLACK BRIDGE

Black Bridge Rd, Mexico

Off Route 17, you'll find a storied swimming hole in the Swift River that locals have enjoyed for Lord knows how long. We hear there's a rope swing under the bridge, and when the water is high enough, folks do take a leap from the bridge itself. There are also rumors of skinny-dipping, but that's only after dark.

Tumbledown Brewing

805 Farmington Falls Rd., Farmington

207-491-9822

<https://www.tumbledownbrewing.com/>

If there's one thing the Rumford/Mexico area could use, it's a brewery. But you'll just have to make do about 20 minutes up the road in Farmington, where Tumbledown is a small, but mighty brewery where you never know what's going to be on tap, thanks to their small-batch philosophy. Look for the Krummholz White Stout — truly unique in Maine.

Heal Yourself Naturally [Medical]

128 Main St., Mexico

207-507-1100

No website available

We actually have no idea what's inside this shop, but it's right next to the Mexico Town Hall and the Lewiston Sun Journal says they've been offering classes on cannabis for health care applications to central Mainers and that's good enough for us. Stop in and see what they're all about and report back.

DUCKTRAP BRIDGE

Route 1, Lincolnville

Spanning Ducktrap River, the Ducktrap Bridge stands out as pretty unique in Maine because it's actually two bridges, one built on top of the other, due to a change in highway grade in 1932. If you're an engineering buff, you're gonna like this one. The unknown designer(s) adapted the existing bridge to meet the requirements for raising the grade of the highway while creating one of the most unusual engineering monuments in the state. We're told it's a good drop with the right tide.

Threshers Brewing Company

22 Main St., Searsmont

207-342-2337

<https://www.threshersbrewingco.com/>

An inventive and artistic spot, Threshers made some noise by collaborating with the and Seepeoples last year, and you never know when a local band might be playing. If you stop in, make sure you grab a Ponderosa, the house special, an amber ale that goes down easy.

Sweet Relief

1 Priest Road, Northport

207-930-5430

<https://sweetreliefshopthemaine.business.site/>

This place is turning into one of the true hidden gems Maine has to offer. By the side of Route 1 and not just a small bit out of the way, it's worth a stop if you're anywhere close. The prices are great, their own weed seems like they harvested it yesterday, and they always have a selection from other growers down the road.



WORDS / **SAM PFEIFLE**
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



AWESOME SAUCE

A POURING OF CARAMEL FOR AN ICY TASTE OF SUMMER

WORDS / PHOTOS
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Summer is on its way and to me there is nothing better than a bowl of classic French vanilla ice cream with a robust, dark, salted-caramel-sauce drizzle when the weather gets hot. True French vanilla ice cream has a good amount of egg yolks and vanilla beans in it, unlike a lot of store-bought vanilla ice creams that contain fake vanilla (vanillin) and stabilizers that are added for ice crystal stabilization, as well as for the long storage that most mass manufactured ice creams will endure.

This ice cream is also super delicious with roasted summer fruits or crunchy candied nuts. Keep in mind that the ice cream base is best to sit overnight in the fridge for optimum flavor development before churning it in your ice cream maker.

Ice Cream Ingredients:

654g. milk
627g. heavy cream (minimum 35% milk fat)
240g. egg yolks
385g. sugar
2 Tahitian vanilla beans
4.5g. kosher salt

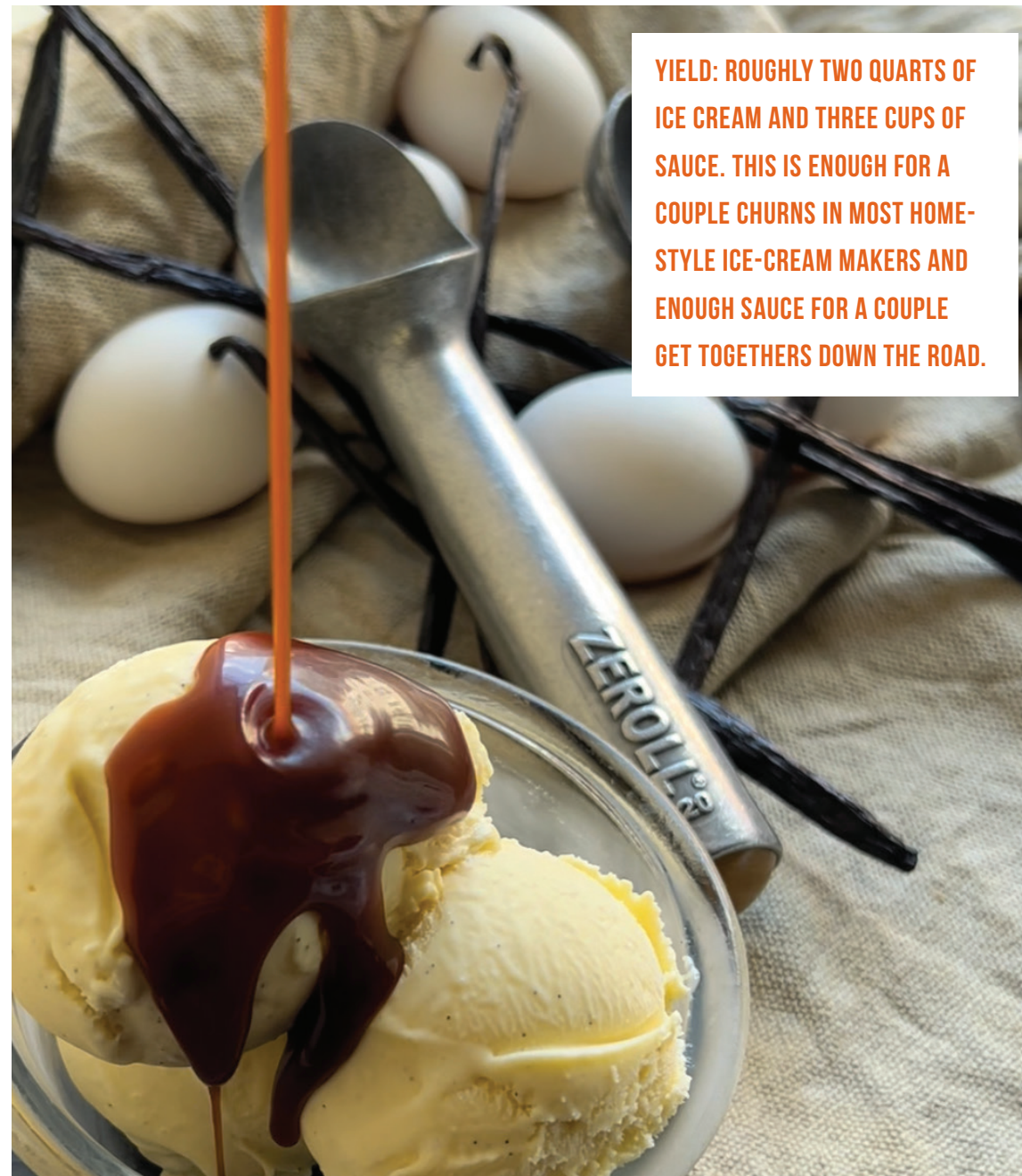
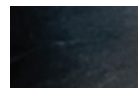
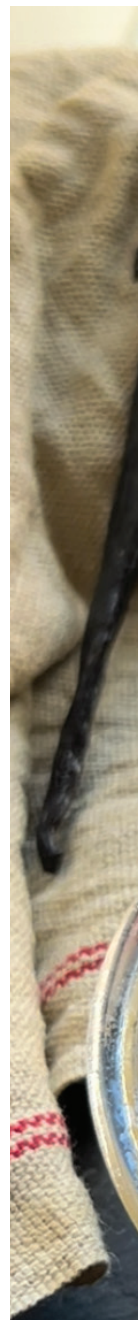
Ice Cream Directions:

At the outset, set up an ice water bath that will fit the pot you're using for the ice cream base. This will be used to chill the base down quickly.

Now, lay the vanilla beans flat and, using the tip of a paring knife, slice down the length of the bean, splitting it in half. Next, take the paring knife and flatten the bean while running it down the center of each half, removing all the vanilla seeds from both halves. It may take two scrapes to get all the seeds out.

In a four-quart, heavy-bottomed pot, add the seeds and the scraped vanilla bean pods to the heavy cream, milk, sugar, and salt and stir well with a wooden spoon to combine well. Bring this mixture to a full boil, remove from the heat, and cover for 15 minutes to infuse.

While the dairy mixture is infusing, add the egg yolks to a bowl and whisk thoroughly. Once the 15-minute infusion is done, whisk in the hot dairy in small increments to the yolks while whisking continually. This is called "tempering the yolks." You don't want to add all the dairy at once, as it may scramble the eggs. Next, pour this whole mixture back into the pot and, while stirring continually with a wooden spoon, cook it over medium heat until it reaches 185°F and coats the back of the spoon well.



FRENCH VANILLA ICE CREAM WITH CARAMEL SAUCE

YIELD: ROUGHLY TWO QUARTS OF ICE CREAM AND THREE CUPS OF SAUCE. THIS IS ENOUGH FOR A COUPLE CHURNS IN MOST HOME-STYLE ICE-CREAM MAKERS AND ENOUGH SAUCE FOR A COUPLE GET TOGETHERS DOWN THE ROAD.

At this point, place the pot into the reserved ice bath and stir the ice cream base periodically until it reaches 50°F, replacing the ice as needed.

Now strain the base through a fine sieve, and place it in the refrigerator overnight. BTW: Rinse the vanilla beans under cold water and let them dry out on the counter. Once dried, add them to a container of sugar and in a month you'll have vanilla sugar!

The next day, pour the base into your ice-cream maker and churn it per instructions. While churning, make sure to put a container in the freezer to prep it to hold the ice cream you scoop out of the maker. When the ice cream is between 19-21°F and looks like soft serve ice cream, scrape into the cold container and freeze for four hours to harden up before serving.

Caramel Sauce Ingredients:

396g. sugar
376g. heavy cream
A good 'ol grip of kosher salt (don't be scared)
116g. butter (room temp)

Caramel Sauce Directions:

Before starting, make sure you measure out everything and keep in mind that cooking sugar to caramel can be very dangerous if these steps are not done correctly. You don't want to stir it while it's cooking.

First, heat the heavy cream in the microwave to apx. 120°F. Then, in a heavy-bottomed pot large enough to fit all the ingredients, add the sugar and just enough water to create what we like to call "wet sand," like when you were at the beach as a kid and made cool wet-sand stalagmites.

Using a brush with a small bowl of water for wetness, brush down the sides of the pot to consolidate all the grains of sugar to the bottom.

Now cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid and turn the heat to high, bringing the sugar to a boil and letting it boil covered for two minutes. The lid may be going crazy, but leave it on for the full two minutes to make sure all the granules of sugar are dissolved.

Remove the lid and take a look inside to make sure all the sugar is dissolved (if it's not, cover again for another minute), but DO NOT stir it. Stirring sugar while it's cooking could result in the sugar recrystallizing and then you'll have to start over (think every contestant on The Great British Baking Show).

Now heat the sugar to 410°F. At this stage, the sugar will be a dark amber color. Anything less will result in a not-so-bold caramel flavor, so don't be scared when it smokes quite a bit.

Once you like the color, turn off the heat and VERY CAREFULLY whisk in the hot cream in a steady stream. It will hiss and bubble like crazy so watch out for the steam, it'll get ya. When that's done, whisk in the good 'ol grip of salt followed by the butter.

Make sure to let it cool to room temperature before refrigerating, then warm it slightly before drizzling over ice cream.

Brant Dadaleares is the founder and owner of Gross Confection Bar, which features a bakery, dessert restaurant, and bar in Portland's Old Port. Find it at www.GrossConfectionBar.com.

I HAVE BEEN PAINTING



AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER, I'VE WANTED TO BE AN ARTIST. LONG BEFORE I WAS EVER MAKING ANY MUSIC, I WAS A FOUR-YEAR- OLD KID DRAWING COMIC BOOK CHARACTERS WITH CAPES AND MUSCLES. IN FIRST GRADE, I BOUGHT A BOOK AT THE SCHOLASTIC BOOK FAIR THAT TAUGHT ME HOW TO DRAW DRAGONS STEP-BY-STEP. I DREW EVERY TIME I CAME ACROSS A BLANK SHEET OF PAPER. MY MOM WOULD PRAISE MY DRAWINGS EFFUSIVELY, SO I WAS CONVINCED I WAS GOING TO SPEND THE REST OF MY YEARS ASCENDING THROUGH THE RANKS OF ILLUSTRATORS UNTIL I WAS WORKING FOR MARVEL COMICS.

And then I got to third grade.

One day it was raining, so we had inside recess. I remember sitting at my desk, masterfully drawing a map (I was into maps for some reason, maybe I'd be a cartographer, too). I got up to walk over to the pencil sharpener and everything changed.

I glanced down at this other student's desk on my way and realized my career as a legendary illustrator was over before it had started.

There was a girl in my class — let's call her Melissa (there were an abundance of Melissas in 1993) — who was actually a great artist. Her animals looked like real animals, with shading and correct proportions, not the stick-figure cartoon versions I had spent years perfecting. She was a natural. And I sucked. I had clearly been hyped-up by my mom's praise to believe I was the real deal, but I was an imposter. I remarked to Melissa that her drawing was amazing and returned hopelessly to my seat with my future uncertain.

In the years that followed, I would pivot to new passions: writing, music, graphic design, girls, Magic: The Gathering, etc. A few of these pursuits would pan out for me but deep down I'd always be jealous of the artistic abilities of Melissa, Mary-Jude Larkin (who I met in 5th grade), Amy DeNuzzio (in 7th grade), and so on. Even as an adult "professional rapper," I have to outsource my napkin-sketch ideas to actual real artists like my friend Steve Gendron (@crookstreetart) or the painter Ryan Kohler (@ryankohlerpaintings) to transform them into something presentable.

Music is obviously a form of art. Art, especially when you are creating it in your youth, is pure expression. Sometimes it hints at something you can't even articulate trapped inside you, just

waiting for a guitar chord or a colored pencil to set it free. As a teenager and young adult, my music was that for me. Just raw, honest, pure expression.

Then it started making me money. As soon as my CDs started selling, fans started picking favorite songs, and the radio played along, the walls of the box began to rise. Twelve years later, I've renovated a bit and pushed some of the walls back a few feet, but, overall, my musical creativity is trapped within that self-created box — a prison of "Spouse."

The box is invisible but it's there: What do the fans expect? Is this too aggressive? My most successful songs are uplifting songs with some funny lyrics sprinkled in — should I only make those type of songs? What are other successful musicians making right now? Will this get views on Instagram? Would this chorus make a good TikTok sound? Is that lyric something "Spouse" would say? You can probably see how all these unspoken, limiting questions I run my creativity through could stifle the purity of self-expression.

Which brings me to painting.

I decided that I would spend 2022 trying new things. So on January 1, I sat down at the easel and began painting all my "Spouse" album covers. By February, I'd painted them all, putting in dozens of hours with brushes, palette knives, failing and learning along the way. I began painting other things: Star Wars characters, Wells Beach, my daughter in a field holding a sword, etc.

By March I was feeling confident enough in my progress that I posted a few pics online, which shocked some and earned me some genuine praise — even from some of the aforementioned professional artists I admire. Which made me feel good about it.

Of course, along with the praise came suggestions: Twitter guy says I should've added a lobster roll to the picture; Instagram guy wants to hire me to paint something he chooses. Someone even offered to buy one for a bunch of money. At some point, I will inevitably sell some paintings. And on that day, a new box will start to build itself around this type of art, too, as soon as money — the great destroyer of creative freedom — enters the chat.

For now, I'm still no Melissa, but I'm feeling as free as a kid drawing superheroes.



WORDS / SPOSE
CONTRIBUTING WRITER



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