

ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

Business Spotlight

Located in Goldendale, Washington, Dwinell Country Ales is a small brewery, winery and orchard that puts their love of the art of brewing into every craft beer, cider, and wine they produce. Simple, slow fermentations using local ingredients and native yeast gives each of their products the unique taste of the Gorge. The use of traditional blending methods, mixed-culture yeasts, and natural carbonation conditioning allow Dwinell Country Ales to offer unique brews. **In this spotlight, learn how owners Justin and Jocelyn Leigh weathered the closing of their tasting room and found opportunities to expand distribution into new markets despite the pandemic.**



Northwest living...

We met in Chicago when we were both in graduate school. After college, we went back to Jocelyn's home in the Pacific Northwest. When we were looking at properties to start a commercial brewery, we found that Goldendale was the perfect location for many reasons. The real estate prices were within budget and it was close to the fruit and grain suppliers. It was also close to the distribution areas of Seattle, Bend, and Portland.

Starting up...

As we were looking at land in Klickitat County, we connected with local county officials who introduced us to MCEDD. We used our personal savings and received a [MCEDD business loan](#) which we used to buy a forklift and some other necessary start-up equipment.

What makes us unique?

Our ciders are packaged and then finish the fermenting process naturally in the can or keg. Nobody else in the area is making cider in this traditional manner. Similarly, our beers undergo a final re-fermentation in the can or keg - another process that other breweries don't usually use. We believe these methods make a better tasting product. All of our malt is locally grown from family-owned farms. All the grain is grown in Oregon and Washington. Most breweries use grain that is from other countries and malted by multinational ag conglomerates. We use wild yeast harnessed from locally grown fruit. The yeast and malt set our products apart. We capture it, propagate it, and it evolves from beer to beer. Our beers have seasonal variations, and it varies from batch to batch. It is a different approach, but it's what makes us unique.



The pandemic...

The pandemic hit us hard. We had to close our tasting room that had been open five days a week and lay off our employees. Pivoting was the buzzword during the pandemic, but many businesses were pivoting without a long-term goal - it was pure survival mode for most. We stayed on top of relief fund opportunities and applied quickly. We received funding under the CARES Act, the Restaurant Revitalization Fund, and a grant from Washington State Department of Agriculture. The funds allowed us to focus on distributing and not be reactionary. We upgraded our brewing and bottling equipment. We now have a more automated filling machine that has allowed us to double our output.



"Our beers and ciders have a special place in our hearts. They are truly a labor of love. They are alive and mature at their own pace."

Adapting...

We shifted our focus and expanded our distribution footprint. We expanded in our existing markets and then entered new markets in California, South Korea, and Denmark. We did market research to determine whether we should use bottles or cans for distribution. We could sell more beer in cans, but there is a perceived value in a bottled product. We also focused on increasing the quality of our product and refined our fermentation processes. It was an interesting evolution of not only changing packaging, but also changing the beer to fit the packaging.



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