

Locals Launch Distillery

By Sophie Braccini



Kim and Barry Sutherland in the distillery.

Photos provided

With its immense distillation columns, condensers, collection tanks and large metal boilers, Sutherland Distilling is reminiscent of a giant copper and stainless steel laboratory where esthetically oriented scientists are at work. Barry Sutherland, with his brother Ryan and friend Eric Larimer, are the scientists who decided that making hard alcohol – vodka, rum and bourbon – would be a worthy endeavor. Their first releases can be purchased locally and are in use by at least one restaurant, and the partners already boast their first tasting prize – Diablo's Shadow vodka won a bronze medal, out of 35 entries, at the 2014 American Distilling Institute competition.

"There are a lot of wineries and micro-breweries around, but no artisan professional distillery," says Barry Sutherland. "It is a completely different animal, with different regulations dating back to Prohibition. But it is something I always wanted to do." The Moraga dad, who is raising three young children with his wife Kim, a nurse practitioner, is also the CEO of NorCal Ambulance; the distillery began as a hobby.

"We self-funded the company and so we don't need to make it very profitable at the onset," says Sutherland. "We produce a small amount of

amazing product; our focus is on quality, not volume." The young businessman says that it took years of tinkering and modifying their own machinery before they felt the product was good enough. "If it is not good it doesn't leave the building," he states.

Sutherland says they use ingredients that are local and/or of the highest quality, such as raw cane sugar and local non-GMO corn. "We go to the farm, we pick up the corn, and we mill it ourselves," he explains. "We mix the cornmeal with hot water, cool it, add yeast and let it ferment. After it's fermented, we distill it." That's when the art begins, as the temperature and degree of refinement of the alcohol are precisely controlled. The variation in taste comes from the different ingredients used and the degree to which the product is distilled. "We intentionally left a little hint of the corn in the vodka," says Sutherland. "Traditionally you make a completely neutral spirit, but we didn't want to be like everybody else, and we got very good corn; we wanted it to be a little creamier, and it's also a little stronger. We wanted to make vodka, but something that was distinctly ours."

Sutherland says that the initial response from the market has been

very good. "Our award-winning Diablo's Shadow silver rum and vodka are now on shelves. We can be found locally at both Moraga Wine and Spirits and Jackson's Wines and Spirits in Lafayette. In fact, Kevin Nunez at Diablo Foods says he is placing an order as well. It is great to see our local, hand-crafted spirits on shelves. Greater still, it is selling very well," he adds.

Kip Bruzzone owns the pair of local liquor stores. "We enjoy the artisan end of the market," says Bruzzone. "Things evolve in cycles and for a few years now our customers have had an appreciation for locally crafted alcohols that are made by passionate people who put a lot of time and effort in developing interesting drinks." Bruzzone said he had never met a local distiller and he immediately liked Sutherland's enthusiasm. "It's a good product, and the final decision is made by the customers," he said, adding that he was happily surprised to see how well Diablo's Shadow has been selling and he has already re-ordered.

At Rustic Tavern in Lafayette, co-owner Tressa Rust tasted the spirits and said she was very impressed by the quality, the great ingredients, and how the flavor came out. Rust's talented bartender, Annie Grosman, was

inspired to create cocktails using local ingredients. "She created 'Scenic Look,' in which she blends fresh blackberry, cardamon syrup, fresh lemon juice, smoked peppercorn and smoked sage with the vodka," says Rust. "The rum cocktail is called 'Diablo Runner,' after the Rustic Tavern 10k running team, and mixes fresh cantaloupe, fresh rosemary, pineapple juice and a splash of Chartreuse with the rum."

Sutherland regrets that he could not set up his distillery in Lamorinda. "For municipalities, we are a strange animal," says Sutherland, "and we needed a very large hall for the equipment." The partners found it in Livermore. "The difficulty with the spirit regulations is that we cannot sell where we produce, and most liquor stores don't have the specific licensing to offer hard liquor tasting," he explains. "People can come visit us and taste, but to buy, they have to go somewhere else."



Sutherland Distilling Co.
3189 Independence Drive
Livermore, Calif.
(925) 447-0873
info@sutherlanddistilling.com
www.sutherlanddistilling.com

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.

business briefs

Amphora Nueva

www.amphoranueva.com

Claire and Nathan Bradley, owners of the Berkeley-based olive oil and balsamic vinegar company Amphora Nueva, recently confirmed that they plan to open next to The Cooperage in downtown Lafayette, probably in September. The Amphora Nueva concept is to offer local olive oils and vinegars in large stainless steel containers that people can taste and pour into the containers of their choice.

Happy Fit

(925) 289-8731

www.happyfithealthcoaching.com

Liz Talbot designs custom nutrition and fitness plans for individuals. Her first office was located in Walnut Creek and she recently expanded to Lamorinda. "I offer classes through a private studio in Moraga and also go to people's homes," she says. Talbot graduated from Cal in 2007 and is married to Campolindo alum Matthew Talbot (now a lawyer). She is an ACSM certified personal trainer, ISSA certified fitness nutritionist, and Yoga Alliance certified yoga instructor. In addition, she's studied wellness coaching and is trained in ACSM's Wellcoaches technique. "I am so happy to have found Liz through the Lamorinda Mom's Club," says Erica Barr. "Her experience and approach to training has been beneficial in many ways... Liz helps me to stay motivated while I'm pregnant and would really rather just nap than exercise." Talbot herself is the mom of a 9-month-old baby. "I love what I do," says Talbot. "What we're eating and how we're using our bodies is fundamental to our wellbeing."



Liz Talbot, trainer and nutritionist, now in Lamorinda. Photo provided

News from the three Chambers of Commerce

Lafayette

The Young Professionals Group will meet at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, July 31 in the chamber conference room. Stephanie Shaterian of FLO Content will discuss a process for creating unique, creative and compelling videos. The Young Professionals Group is for those 21-39 years old. For more information go to www.meetup.com/Young-Professionals-Group-Lafayette-CA.

Join us for a ribbon-cutting at 5 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 14 at Indigo & Poppy, 1009 Oak Hill Road.

Moraga



Executive director Kathe Nelson reports that the 3rd annual Moraga Chamber Golf Tournament, played on July 14, was a great success.

Photo Christina French

A free training for chamber members looking to maximize their presence on the Shop Moraga First website will take place at 6 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 4 at Saint Mary's College. Following the training session, the chamber will launch the program to the public in a series of ads, slogans and messages that will drive community members to the site where they will be able to search via keywords, print coupons and look for specials that will keep them shopping here in Moraga. Contact Kathe Nelson at (925) 323-6524 to reserve a seat for the training.

Orinda

The next chamber mixer will be held from 5:30 to 7 p.m. on Aug. 19 at Casa Orinda Restaurant, 20 Bryant Way.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

Celebrating an Anniversary?

If your business is celebrating a significant anniversary (5, 10, 20 years or more...) send us a photo of your business, the owner(s) or the staff with specific information about your business and what you're celebrating, and we'll include it in an upcoming issue.

Current Listings



20 Saint Hill Road
Orinda

5BR | 3 BA | 3693 SF
Stunning contemporary
with panoramic
Mt. Diablo views!
\$1,595,000

PENDING!

312 Camino Sobrante
Orinda

5BR | 3BA | 3628 SF

Elegant contemporary
in the heart of Orinda's
Country Club!

\$1,549,000



JUST SOLD!

3299 Beechwood Dr.
Lafayette

2BR | 1 BA | 1278 SF

Classic Trails
neighborhood cottage!

\$810,000



925|708-1396 Tony Conte
925|324-6246 Mary Beth MacLennan
tconte2001@hotmail.com
mbmacLennan@gmail.com
CalBRE License #:
00959101|01480008

Prudential
California Realty