

Baaaaa! Beer is Here

Originally a sheep farm, Brewery Ardennes has grown into an award-winning craft brewery and eatery.

by Bethany Snyder, with Stacey Edinger

The unexpected can catch us off guard, leave us confused or disrupt our path. But it can also lead to creation and success. Such was the case for Derek and Stacey Edinger, cofounders of Brewery Ardennes in Geneva.

It started when Derek presented Stacey with a spreadsheet illustrating the money they'd save by purchasing homebrewing equipment instead of buying imported Belgian beer. "Little did I know what adventures were in store from a weekend hobby," said Stacey.

A mechanical engineer by training and a problem solver by nature, Derek worked in the aerospace and

(Continued on page 56. Read about Chef Jayden White on page 54)





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Q&A Chef Jayden White



When did you start cooking at Brewery Ardennes?

I joined the team at Brewery Ardennes in the spring of 2021, about a month prior to our opening in May. I was fortunate to be responsible for our initial menu development.

Where did you learn to cook and how long have you been doing this?

Growing up in a Sicilia family definitely helped! I learned to cook—to have a passion for food and ingredients—from my mother and family. My parents owned a restaurant when I was young; I started as a dishwasher and then moved to cooking. My time in Italy was very important, as were my first few jobs after culinary school. I've been cooking professionally for 17 years.

Was there any other profession you wanted to be before you became a chef?

I originally went to school for criminal justice and always wanted to be a detective.

What's your favorite dish on the menu and why?

I think it depends on the season and my mood. If I had to pick, it would probably be something like octopus, mussels or fish, as I've always loved cooking seafood. I love the diversity of creating new dishes with different produce, herbs and beer that can complement seafood.

What about the Finger Lakes area inspires you?

The diversity of agriculture. The quality of products that can be grown and produced in such a harsh climate and short growing season is amazing, and it makes my job as a chef easier. I focus on letting the ingredients speak for themselves and get out of the way!

What do you like best about your job?

First and foremost, it's the people I work with. Everyone gets along very well and wants to make the guest experience at Ardennes fantastic. Our owners give me a lot of creative freedom, which I appreciate. It also doesn't hurt that the brewery's barn is beautiful, which makes me excited to work in such a unique space with a cool history!

Do you have a "secret ingredient" that you like to put in the food you prepare?

It certainly helps to have a good pantry. Some of the things I like to use are vinegars, lemon, miso, anchovies, Parmesan, dried mushrooms and chilies. Sometimes an unexpected ingredient in a dish gives the perfect salty or acidic note that you didn't realize was missing but makes a huge difference.



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food & libations



(Continued from page 52)

satellite industries before co-founding a technology company – his first taste of building a business from the ground up. Stacey spent her career in hospitality sales and marketing. The couple shares a passion for travel and discovering new experiences.

Derek's homebrewing hobby took an unexpected commercial turn in 2019, when a casual glance at a real estate app led the Edingers to photos of a one-of-kind French Norman-style barn, which led to a "what if we start a brewery together" discussion. Built in 1909 to house more than 2,000 sheep, the stone and slate structure was the pride and joy of Katharine Bell Lewis of Buffalo, owner of the 800+ acre Bellwood Farms. The sheep barn suffered two significant fires; the 5,800 square feet that is now Brewery Ardennes represents roughly one third of the original complex. The restoration of the barn was completed in 18 months, and the brewery opened in late May 2021.

"The strength of our local community and strong attraction for visitors was a key factor in selecting Geneva to build our business," said Derek. Located just off the Seneca Wine Trail, Brewery Ardennes is convenient to Rochester, Canandaigua, Ithaca, Syracuse and Buffalo. "We've been fortunate to develop relationships with other craft beverage makers throughout the Finger Lakes and continue to be amazed at the creativity and diversity that surround us," said Stacey.

More than the brewery name comes from the Ardennes region

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in their beverage offerings and in pairing dinner experiences.

The first beer Derek made as a homebrewer was a Belgian-style Tripel, a strong golden ale traditionally brewed by Trappist monks. It's still his favorite style. "In honor of that first batch, we've committed to brew a special Tripel each

May to celebrate Ardennes' birthday," Derek said.

Many of the recipes that the Edingers brew today have roots in a grimy notebook that has survived for more than 25 years. Their focus is on making classic Belgian styles like Wheat, Blonde and Speciale Belge, along the Trappist styles such as Dubbel, Tripel and Quadrupel. "We're proud to be a NY Farm Brewery, using great hops and malts from NY farmers," said Stacey. "Looking to our future, we'd love to create a unique farmhouse style of beer that could only be produced in New York State."

Derek, Stacey, and their French bulldogs Barley and Hops are pleased to greet guests daily at Brewery Ardennes, the welcome result of a series of unexpected events. And they're ready for whatever surprises await as they continue their journey together. 

of Belgium, a favorite travel spot for the Edingers. "We were inspired to create the same kind of inclusive, welcoming and fun community gathering spot," said Stacey, explaining that they were often greeted by a pub owner's dog or shared a pint and great food with another brewer, sometimes using hand gestures to overcome language barriers.

Inspired by many of the Belgian pubs and restaurants they visited, the Edinger's culinary program is focused on cooking with the season, treating ingredients respectfully and thoughtfully curating food and beer pairings. "Our menu changes frequently – almost daily – based on available ingredients and beers that we're highlighting," said Derek. The couple highlights local wineries, cideries and distilleries

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