

BUILDING BUSINESS: BAD MARTHA'S BREWERY IN EDGARTOWN

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MARTHA'S VINEYARD & NANTUCKET

the kitchen edition



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THE GOOD, THE BAD



AND THE HOPPY

Bad Martha offers wicked good brews—and a wicked good time—at its distinctively designed Vineyard brewery

BY HALEY COTE



"What happens on the Vineyard stays on the Vineyard," so claims one cheeky T-shirt sold at Bad Martha Farmer's Brewery on Martha's Vineyard. What's not kept an island secret, however, is the brewery itself.

Located in Edgartown on the site of Donaroma's Nursery, Bad Martha Farmer's Brewery has attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors since opening in 2014, serving as more than just a brewing facility for Bad Martha's craft beers. After launching Bad Martha on the Vineyard in 2013, co-founder Jonathan Blum says he and business partner Peter Rosbeck of Rosbeck Builders decided they needed a special place for people to experience their beer. The barn-style brewery is that place, providing patrons a unique and idyllic setting to enjoy the many varieties of freshly made Bad Martha brews—like the Honey Helles, 508 IPA, or the new Shark Bite Jalapeno Cucumber Kolsch, all concocted by master brewer Jacobi Reid.

"I love coming here because everybody's happy," Blum says. "We

want this to be a really chill, relaxing place where people who live on the island and tourists can come to enjoy a delicious beer."

Bad Martha beer certainly isn't ordinary beer, so it's fitting that its brewery—and the way its brewery was built—isn't ordinary either. When he set out to build the Bad Martha brewery in 2014, Blum says his vision was, in essence, Wine Country meets Martha's Vineyard. "I wanted to create for a brewery what you'd find at a Napa Valley or Sonoma Valley winery," he explains.

Blum enlisted Vineyard architect—and friend—Patrick Ahearn, FAIA, to bring his vision to life. For the "country brewery" look desired, Ahearn went with a post-and-beam barn design—and he knew exactly who could best build such a structure.

"I had designed several barns with a group of Amish men from Lancaster, Pennsylvania," Ahearn says, "so I brought them into the mix to build the timber-framed structure." The three



Amish carpenters pre-cut all of the pieces of the building in Lancaster, and then had everything delivered to the Vineyard for assembly. Once the Amish men arrived on the island for the build, Ahearn says they had the barn standing within three days, and within three months the brewery was completed. "They transformed the place," he says, "working from sunrise to sunset. It was unbelievable."

And the Amish men—clad in their straw hats and suspenders—worked with no nails or saws, only pegs and dowels, and a 50-pound sledgehammer. When it came to infrastructure including underground utilities and ductwork—things that are foreign to the Amish—Ahearn says there was the challenge of figuring out how to accomplish everything while still working within

the Amish men's system. Thanks in large part to Peter Rosbeck, who served as general contractor on the project, they made it work. "He did a fabulous job getting everything prepped and ready," Ahearn says.

Inside the nearly 3,000-square-foot brewery, conveying the Bad Martha brand was key for Blum, who spent two decades as an executive for Yum! Brands. "My feeling is that branding is really important, and it's got to come through in everything that you do," he says. "Throughout the building we've tried to incorporate things that are true to the brand. At every touch point you should feel the brand come alive."

In the tasting room, tap handles are figurines of the company's logo: the Bad Martha mermaid.

"I WANTED TO CREATE FOR A BREWERY WHAT YOU'D FIND AT A NAPA VALLEY OR SONOMA VALLEY WINERY."
 — JONATHAN BLUM, OWNER OF BAD MARTHA FARMER'S BREWERY



("Legend" has it that when English explorer Bartholomew Gosnold came to Martha's Vineyard in 1602, he encountered a temptress mermaid with jet-black hair who brought him to a field of grapes, then disappeared. The company brews with grape leaves harvested on the island, hence the nod to the mysterious mermaid in their name.) Above one of the bathroom doors is an antique weathervane of a ship made by Vineyard craftsman Frank Adams in the 1920s. "That's important because our story starts with Bartholomew Gosnold in a sailboat," Blum says. Rather than getting a workstation for the brewery's cowler machine (a cowler is a 32 oz. can of beer that's good for three to six months), Blum instead purchased a 400-pound antique butcher table from

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Rosemont, IL. "I felt that just having a work table wouldn't be cool," he says, "I wanted something that felt like it was part of the environment." A wooden life-size sculpture of "Bad Martha," handcarved by Vermont artist Will Kautz, is displayed across from the merchandise area—which, in addition to shirts like the one mentioned at the beginning of this story, features such items as beer-flavored lip balms and sunglasses that double as bottle openers.

"The biggest discussion we had on this place was whether or not to put a big screen TV there," Blum says, pointing to the large glass window in the tasting room that makes the brewing barrels visible. (The brewery features a seven-barrel brewing system, but most of Bad Martha's brewing takes place at a

contract brewer in Ipswich.) "I said no. Here's why: If we did that, it would be a different environment—it would be a sports bar where people would come to watch sports. I want them enjoying our beer and enjoying the environment."

"The whole design makes you feel as though you're part of the process of the beer being made," Ahearn adds.

Outside, a large porch and pergola-covered patio—surrounded by colorful potted and hanging flowers courtesy of Donaroma's—serves as a beer garden, where guests can sit back and socialize while sipping on their sudsy concoctions, and even enjoy live music and games like cornhole. "Being located on the Donaroma property sets the tone in a nice way," Ahearn says.



"[The brewery] is an oasis right off of Upper Main Street where people enjoy spending a few hours. Most people I know go for an afternoon."

Come spring 2018, Blum plans to open a second Bad Martha brewery on the Cape in Falmouth. He says the Cape brewery will mimic their Martha's Vineyard brewery—both design wise and in terms of business practices. Beers will incorporate local ingredients, and a portion of the proceeds will be donated to a local food pantry. "Our value statement is 'Get bad, do good,'" Blum says, "and we feel it's our responsibility to allow people to enjoy our beer but also give back."

To learn more about Bad Martha and the Bad Martha Farmer's Brewery, visit badmarthabeer.com.

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