

Beerburg Brewing

Shop the merchandise at Beerburg Brewing in Austin and you'll find the expected T-shirts and the unexpected: an apothecary selling ash juniper smudge sticks, candles infused with mugwort oil, and custom tea blends. They feature Texas ingredients foraged by Trevor Nearburg, the brewery's founder and herbalist. He previously worked at the Texas breweries Real Ale and Uncle Billy's, where he met fellow brewer Gino Guerrero. They launched Beerburg in early 2020, but the pandemic curtailed big ambitions. Now that restrictions are easing, he's focusing on his environmental efforts and complementing the brewery's pilsners and pale ales with Wildcraft beers. They feature the property's well water, Texas malt, native yeast, and herbs including tarragon-like flowering yarrow, licorice-like horehound, and floral mugwort. "We're trying to make these beers very approachable and palatable using native and local ingredients," he says. "Hops don't grow naturally in Texas." Head brewer Guerrero took permaculture classes, and he's working to rejuvenate the 15-acre property by planting Mexican plum trees and herb berms that can supply the apothecary and brewery. Nearburg also leads monthly walks on the brewery grounds to educate guests about plants. No, that's not a weed—it's the next great Wildcraft ingredient. "I've got brewing herbs hanging from the ceiling over my office," Nearburg says. —JMB

Erin Rasmussen

Wisconsin is rarely the focus of any conversation about wine, but in 2018, Erin Rasmussen began a project to buck that truism. The winemaker and owner of American Wine Project, which recently opened its first tasting room in Mineral Point, Wisconsin, Rasmussen works with local farmers growing newer grape varieties. Designed to be cold-hardy, the hybrids combine native grapes and classic European varietals, and many are only about 30 years old. Cold-climate winemaking is not easy to pull off, and Rasmussen is aiming to break new Midwestern ground in her home state. Though she studied winemaking for years, and worked with producers from New Zealand to Sonoma, academia often doesn't align with the daily findings of working with hybrids in varied climates, providing endless rabbit holes of discovery. Implementing classic winemaking methods while maintaining the philosophy of "no risk, no reward," in terms of style, Rasmussen is working with hybrids like LaCrosse, Frontenac, and Maréchal Foch, as well as some heritage hybrids from pioneering Wisconsin grape breeder Elmer Swenson, such as Kay Gray, St. Croix, King of the North, and even wild grapes, rarely used today. American Wine Project bottles a range of single-varietal hybrid wines, blends, and experimental offerings like an orange piquette. As Rasmussen works to highlight the possibilities of hybrid grapes and the potential in Wisconsin wine, she notes that her wines are in a constant state of

evaluation, both technical and philosophical. "How do I manage the acid and build a balanced wine?" she says. But, perhaps more importantly, "Does the wine have a soul? Does it have an identity?" —Brian Bartels

Superfrico

Leave it to Las Vegas to once again raise the bar on theatricality with the launch of Superfrico, a multi-concept, drinks-and-dining space created by outlandish entertainment production company Spiegelworld and opened last fall. Adjacent to their performance space in The Cosmopolitan, Superfrico houses multiple bars, each with a unique theme, from the main lounge that embraces the restaurant's "Italian American Psychedelic" identifier, to the Ski Lodge with a menu of playful après ski-inspired cocktails. "When I think Italian American, I tend to think of the heyday of the 1970s and '80s, so I began riffing on really classic cocktails that point to that timeframe," says Leo Robitschek, who created the drink menus. "In our Boozy Skunkton, inspired by an Old Fashioned, we infuse the brandy with banana and raisin, with the whole idea behind it being this nostalgic rum raisin flavor. ... Superfrico's main inspiration is fun. It's a house-party atmosphere." —PB

Lou Bank

When Chicagoan Lou Bank talks about his work with S.A.C.R.E.D.—Saving Agave for Culture, Recreation, Education, and Development, the 501(c)(3) not-for-profit he created to improve the quality of life in rural



Mexican communities where spirits such as tequila and mezcal are produced—his enthusiasm for agave spirits and the people who make them is infectious. To date, S.A.C.R.E.D. has raised funds to help build libraries, provide earthquake relief, and plant thousands of agaves for future production, and in late 2021 a substantial partnership with 818 Tequila was established to recycle spent agave fibers into building materials. Bank is also an educator on *Agave Road Trip*, a weekly podcast where he and co-host Salvador "Chava" Peribán distill some of the industry's most complex issues into digestible lessons for "gringo bartenders" in America. At the end of the day the gregarious entrepreneur, whose background in marketing and management in nonprofits positions him well for the work, simply wants to make the world a better place. "I hope that we arrive to a place where everyone recognizes the importance of the multi-generational wisdom in these communities; integrates that wisdom into our global solutions for problems like water insecurity, food insecurity, and climate change; and as a result, S.A.C.R.E.D. is obsolete because quality of life in these rural Mexican communities is such that kids from places like New York City are just as likely to move to rural Michoacán for work as kids from rural Michoacán are to move to New York City." —EJ