

Cindy Ramunno
cramunno@eaglevalleyenterprise.com

June 25, 2014

808 Distillery



The guys behind 808 Distillery — Jef Leonardo and Claude Seeman — holding some of their signature project outside their signature building in Eagle.



808 Distillery's lemoncello.

After a long process, it's here – Eagle's first craft distillery is up and operating.

808 Distillery, LLC has been a labor of love for owners Claude Seeman and Jeff Leonardo. The two long-time locals built the company from the ground up – literally and figuratively – from designing and building the red structure that houses the operation, to hand-crafting their liquors, to slapping the labels on the bottles. They even deliver the product.

“Our hand-made spirits are from our own original family recipes,” said Seeman.

808 Distillery is located in a small, red barn-like building on Eagle's Fairgrounds Road near the rodeo grounds, on the two-acre property of owner Claude Seeman.

For years, microbreweries have been popping up around Colorado. At the time, small-scale beer brewers breaking into the commercial market was a revolutionary idea. Today, microbreweries are increasingly common -- and very successful. Seeman and Leonardo are part of what could be the next revolution – micro distilleries.

Limoncello delights

When life gives you lemons, drink Leo's Limoncello. Their number one product is limoncello, an Italian liquor.

“Everyone loves it – chilled straight or mixed in cocktails,” said Leonardo. Another favorite is mixing it in unsweetened iced tea. Limoncello is best stored in the freezer. Leonardo grew up in an Italian family that took pride in its limoncello recipes. What makes their limoncello unique is a certain yeast that they won't disclose because it is part of a secret recipe. Once done, the liquor is 30 percent proof.

The good thing about limoncello is that it doesn't need to age very long - approximately 12 to 14 days. During the second step in the process, the product goes into Luanne – the 808 Distillery still. Luanne is made of spotless copper and stainless steel, and was crafted by Hillbilly Stills in Kentucky.

The 808 duo is also working on a rum, a vodka, a grapefruit liquor and an orange liquor. Products are now in area liquor stores and restaurants including Seven Hermits, E-Town, The George, The Whiskey Grill, The Minturn Saloon, Riverwalk Wine & Spirits and Kirby Cosmos.

Long-time association

Leonardo and Seeman have been friends in the 1980s, and at a recent Halloween party, the two began joking around about starting a distillery. The next day, Seeman said, “Let's do it.” And they did.

“Eventually, we'd love to have a tasting room,” Leonardo said. For now, the only way to try the product is at local liquor stores and restaurants.

“I really like old-time kinda stuff, and this seemed like the type of thing that everybody used to do and now nobody does,” said Seeman.

A trip through the red building takes you back to your childhood, if your family operated a backyard still.

Local and artesian products of many kinds have grown in popularity as consumers came to view them as a more sustainable and patriotic choice than imports. Buyers also want to make purchases that have a personal connection, rather than a faceless corporate seal. The products at 808

Distillery are just that, hand-made with raw ingredients. The products will be featured at the Flavor of Colorado event in Avon on the weekend of August 16-17.

For more information, visit www.808distill.com.

©2005 - 2014 Swift Communications, Inc.