

Published May 14, 2019 at 09:55PM / Updated May 14, 2019 at 10:59PM

Bendistillery to start canning its Ablis CBD beverage

Tumalo facility to expand



Pedro Lopez organizes kegs at Bendistillery in Tumalo Wednesday, May 8 2019. The facility is expanding and will begin canning its Ablis CBD beverage. (Dean Guernsey/Bulletin photo)

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Fueled by investor funds, Bendistillery is poised to more than double its production capabilities at its Tumalo facility and begin canning some of its products. Construction has yet to begin on a new 20,000 square foot building, but the company is moving ahead with plans to can Ablis, a CBD-infused nonalcoholic beverage.

Products should be on store shelves starting in September.

It's all because of a cash infusion from Acquired Sales Corp.'s \$7.6 million total investment in Bendistillery, which also manufacturers under the Crater Lake label. Acquired Sales has made one payment of \$1.9 million so far that will enable the company to build and expand its line of CBD beverages, topicals and tinctures. Right now Bendistillery offers three flavors of Ablis in bottles, but will expand to six flavors in cans, said Jim Bendis, company founder.

Ablis has been the star attraction at Bendistillery lately, with yearly sales growth averaging about 300%, even though it represents just 20% of the overall sales, Bendis said. Acquired Sales approached Bendistillery because it was attracted to its CBD-infused beverage, which is distributed in 10 states from Vermont to California to Puerto Rico and Guam in bottles and kegs.

CBD-infused beverages were an \$89 million business in the United States in 2018.

“It’s like we’re running on fire right now, compared to our typical 10% steady growth,” Bendis said. “We’re doing this bigger than we’ve ever done anything with Crater Lake.”

Moving products into cans fits with the trend among craft beer and beverage makers.

“Alcoholic beverage producers looking to distinguish themselves from competitors are increasingly opting for cans,” said Gary Hemphill, Beverage Marketing Corp. managing director of research. “This trend primarily began with craft brewers and has expanded to other alcoholic beverage producers.”

The main reason to shift to cans is they’re cheaper to ship because they’re lighter, said Max Bendis, company chief operating officer.

Crater Lake products — rye whiskey, gin and vodkas — are distributed in 26 states, Guam and Puerto Rico. There’s room to grow once the Alcohol Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, which regulates alcoholic beverages, approves CBD in alcoholic beverages, Jim Bendis said. Then Ablis can be combined in beverages with distilled products.

“We have 23 acres and a farm here where we grow our own rye for our estate rye whiskey,” Bendis said. “We hope to have the structure framed up by the end of the summer.”

Bendistillery has ordered 200,000 cans for its first run of canned Ablis. It will can off-site until its new facility is complete with a canning line built in. When Ablis is launched in cans, it will sport a refreshed new look, Max Bendis said.

Bendis started his distillery business in 1995 and moved to the 24-acre property in Tumalo in 2010. The company uses its own homegrown rye and junipers to make its estate products. Its hemp-derived CBD, which mainly comes from Colorado, doesn't have any tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, the psychoactive compound that gives a "high" feeling, said Max Bendis.

"There is demand out there," Max Bendis said. "There's also a lot of competition. We're looking for companies to team up with for CBD."

— *Reporter: 541-633-2117, sroig@bendbulletin.com*