

# Say I Do with a Brew

Crafting Your Own Wedding Beer

BY MAISIE SMITH







Getting married in Central Oregon certainly has its perks. Stunning mountain backdrops. Juniper-scented breezes. An abundance of sunshine and the resulting good vibes. We also have beer...lots of it. While your guests will assuredly appreciate the keg or two of beer you acquired from your favorite brewery, what they'll love even more is their very own bottle of handcrafted beer to take home at the end of the day.

Just ask Miles Wilhelm. "Half of me is living in the wrong decade," says Miles Wilhelm, Creative Director at Bend Creative Lab and founding partner of Smith Rock Hop Farm, when describing his September 2014 wedding. He and his wife Katy decided on a Great Gatsby theme to indulge Miles' penchant for the Roaring '20s. Complete with glitter,

gold, feathers and guests dressed in 1920s garb ("Uncle Tom wore actual knickers," laughs Miles), the wedding celebrated not only the beginning of a lovely adventure, but also a love for craft beer.

"Katy and I both love good beer," Miles says. It was an easy decision to skip the monogrammed picture frames and Jordan almonds typically presented as wedding souvenirs in favor of unique, handcrafted beers. The couple created three different brews, a Hefeweizen, an IPA and a cherry Stout...to make sure everyone's tastes were covered.

"We had over 100 guests at our wedding so it was impossible to pick one kind of beer style that everyone would prefer. We made

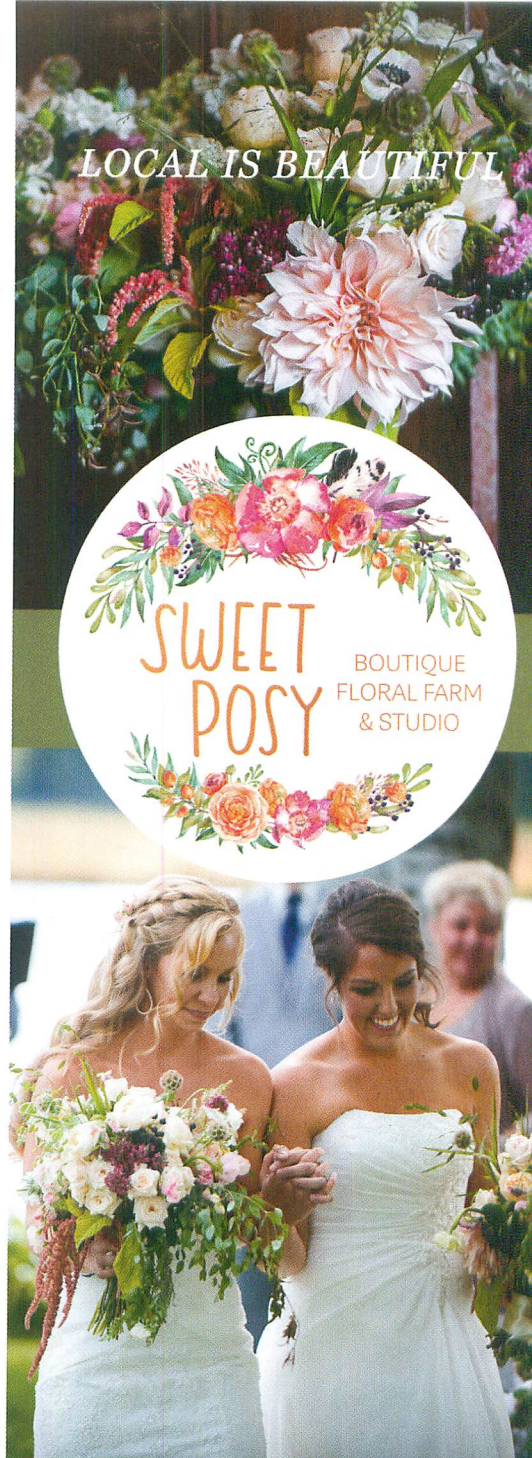




five-gallon batches of three brews just to cover our bases." Each batch produced around fifty 12 oz. bottles of beer. Guests picked a favorite (or two if they were feeling a little cheeky) on their way out. "Everyone loved it. One guest even kept her Stout for almost two years before cracking it open," Miles adds.

Knowing they wanted to keep things simple but special, Miles designed a '20s-themed logo for the beer. Rather than adhering the labels to each bottle and worrying about waterproofing, glue issues

PHOTOGRAPHY: FAR LEFT: BROOKE GENTLE; RIGHT: JOSSELYN PETERSON



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and fading colors, they created handmade tags to hang around the neck of each bottle. "We ordered a custom stamp from a local Bend company and hand-stamped the design on each and every hang tag."

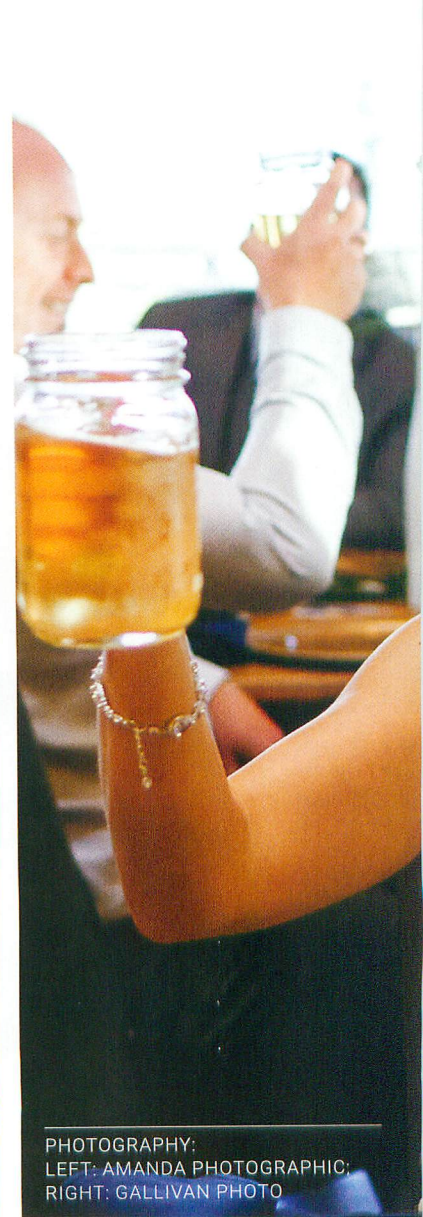
Not sure where to begin when creating your own wedding beer? Miles offers these tips:

**It's all about style.** If your wedding takes place in cooler months, Stouts or Porters tend to be more of a crowd-pleaser. Guests appreciate light and crisp IPAs and Wits during the warm summer months. At the end of the day, though, it's your celebration. Your wedding beer should reflect the story you share as a couple.

**Gather materials.** You should be able to find ingredients for most beer recipes at your local home brew shop. Make sure you have the necessary equipment for each step of the brewing process. If the carefully-timed steps make you nervous, enlist the help of a home brewing friend.

**Start collecting bottles.** Decide on a bottle style and size. Will it be 12 oz. or 22 oz.? If you plan far enough ahead of time, you can enlist the help of family and friends to hand off their empties. Make sure to wash and sterilize them before bottling your beer.

**Give yourself plenty of time.** "Plan for at least three weeks from start to finish for most beers," advises Miles. How much time you'll



PHOTOGRAPHY:  
LEFT: AMANDA PHOTOGRAPHIC;  
RIGHT: GALLIVAN PHOTO

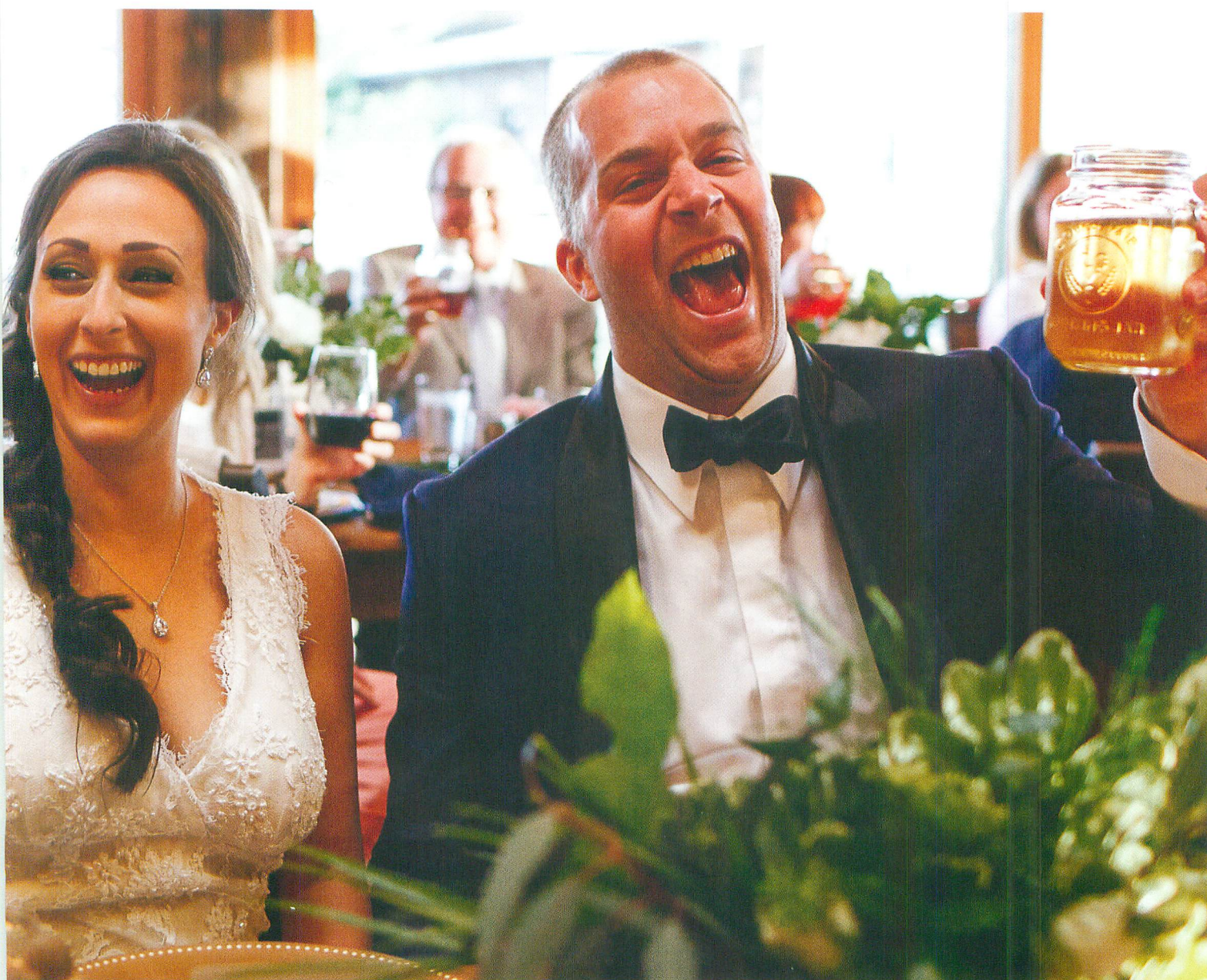


need for the brewing process depends on the style of beer. Lagers typically take more time than IPAs, for example. Planning, brewing, bottling, labeling and storing all takes time. "People underestimate how long it takes to handcap 200 bottles." As long as you store your finished product in a temperate environment, your wedding beer can be made well ahead of your wedding celebration.

**Keep it simple.** "We customized everything we possibly could," says Miles. "Crafting our own beer was a labor of love, a way to show our guests how much we appreciated them. But we knew it also needed to be simple, for sanity's sake." By using a stamp for the hang tag artwork, Miles and Katy were able to streamline the labeling process and turn their focus towards creating an unforgettable event.

What if you don't have the time, energy or confidence to home-brew a masterpiece? Immersion Brewing has your back. One of Bend's newest breweries, Immersion offers the unique experience of hand-crafting your own beer under the supervision of a professional brewmaster.

The first thing one notices when walking into Immersion's Brew-It-Yourself area is how spanking clean everything is. The copper kettles shine. Various malts are organized in apothecary-style containers against one wall, a veritable "candy store" for craft beer lovers. Thoughtful lighting is both inviting and energizing. Bar stools beckon you to sit with the brewer and chat about all things beer.





With over 30 recipes to choose from, Immersion Brewing can help anyone make a great beer. The process is simple: 1. Book an appointment; 2. Show up for your appointment; 3. Choose your recipe; 4. Create something fabulous in only two short hours; 5. Return in three weeks for bottling; 6. Walk out with five gallons of your own handcrafted beer!

The Immersion Brew-It-Yourself experience is perfect for Bachelor and Bachelorette parties as well as for couples wanting to create something special. Sip on a frothy cold one between adding hops and malt to professional-grade copper kettles. Laugh and stir together. Pricing begins at \$180, which includes ingredients, bottles, caps, custom labels and...beer.

Chris Hudson, the Brew-It-Yourself Manager at Immersion Brewing, is looking forward to helping more couples create the perfect beer for their celebration. "There are so many possibilities. I love walking people through the process of making an unforgettable beer." -WV



Please visit Immersion Brewing at [www.imbrewing.com](http://www.imbrewing.com) for more information on Brew-It-Yourself or to book a session.

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