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FOOD & DRINK

Black Rose Blending makes a home for hopheads, wine lovers and artists

By Victoria Davis, Special to the Cap Times

Dec 3, 2023



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Kyle Metz, owner of Black Rose Blending Co., is pictured in the brewing area of the building on Gilson Street.

BECK HENRECKSON

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Madison brewer Kyle Metz describes the inside of a wooden fermentation barrel as a “living environment” with its own ecosystem of yeast and bacteria that takes months, even years, to cultivate.

It almost makes Black Rose Blending, his brewery and winery on Madison’s south side, sound like an alchemist’s lab.

“It’s a madness,” Metz said. “And it’s not for everyone.”

Black Rose Blending at 1602 Gilson St. is the former location of Funk Factory, a taproom dedicated to producing lambic-style beer, fermented through exposure to wild yeasts. Metz was a long-time employee of Funk Factory, which he ran for about five years prior to starting Black Rose Blending.



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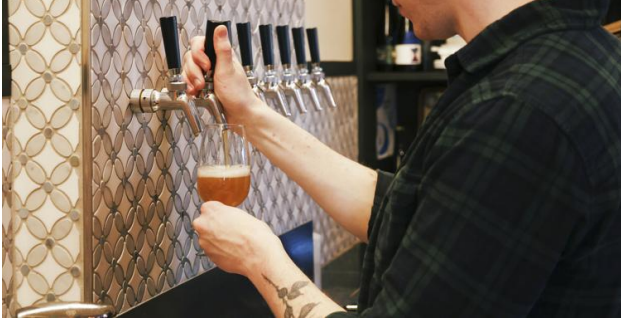
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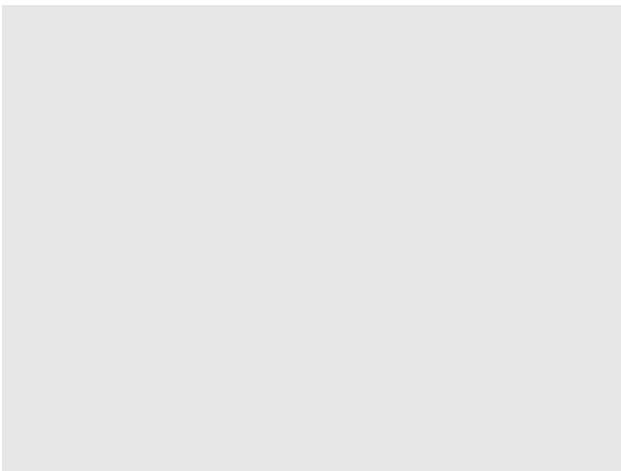
Zach Nelson pours draft beer behind the bar at Black Rose Blending Co.
BECK HENRECKSON

Black Rose was a side project until Funk Factory's owner, Levi Funk, sold the bar and brewing equipment to Metz in 2022.

"We were doing some funky stuff, excuse the pun," Metz said. "But I didn't feel like it was my own. ... I'm a huge fan of trying to find cool, unique barrels and not necessarily adding a ton of ingredients to the beer itself. I want to let the barrel shine, which is why I like getting barrels that are freshly dumped, so there's still some residuals of whatever was in there."

Now, Black Rose Blending is a multi-faceted brewery-meets-winery, rooted in the mixed-culture beer world while exploring the production of minimal intervention wine, funky cider and piquette, a lightly sparkling wine made from grape stems, skins and seeds.

Black Rose has nine bottles available for purchase with four house beers on draft, along with an additional four guest beers. Metz has made some cider blends, like the Horizons (\$12 for 375 mL) with fermented wild ale and barrel-fermented cider. His first true wine is in process and will be released next year.

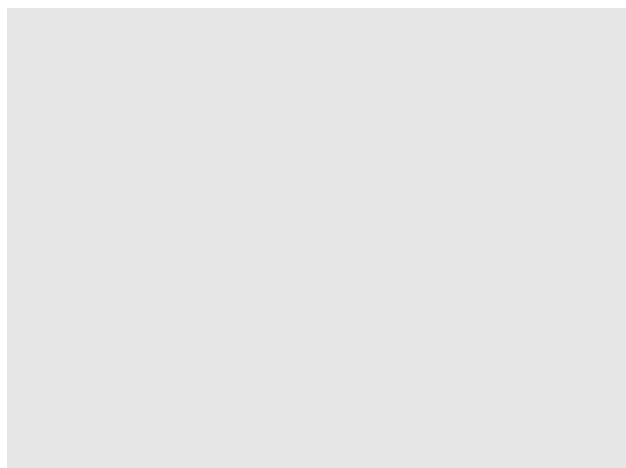


Black Rose Blending Co. beer is sold by the bottle or on tap in the taproom.
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"We've been playing around with different fruit wines, trying to come up with some truly unique barrels that you can't find anywhere else," said Metz. "We're doing our own thing. We don't brew to a specific style.

"Operations like this are few and far between in Wisconsin, but also nationwide," he added. "I don't want to say this kind of blending is going

out of fashion, but it's certainly becoming scarce. At one time, it was booming. But this industry has many peaks and troughs.”



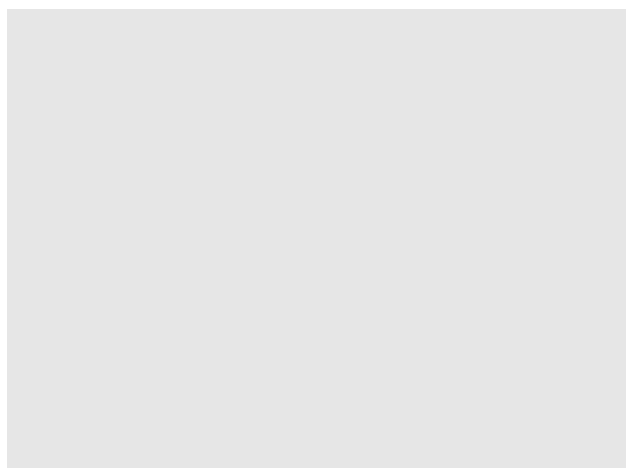
Black Rose Blending Co. is now in the former Funk Factory Geuzeria on the south side of Madison.

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Finding the right profile

Metz favors wood barrels, usually oak, that were previously used for gin or unorthodox spirits. One of Black Rose Blending's more popular draft beers, Moonflares, came from a “failed experiment” to produce a raspberry wine that still yielded a worthwhile barrel.

Moonflares is actually a blend of two beers: an oak-aged sour beer further fermented on cherries, and a tart saison aged in that accidental raspberry wine barrel.



Barrels are stacked in the brewing room at Black Rose Blending Co.

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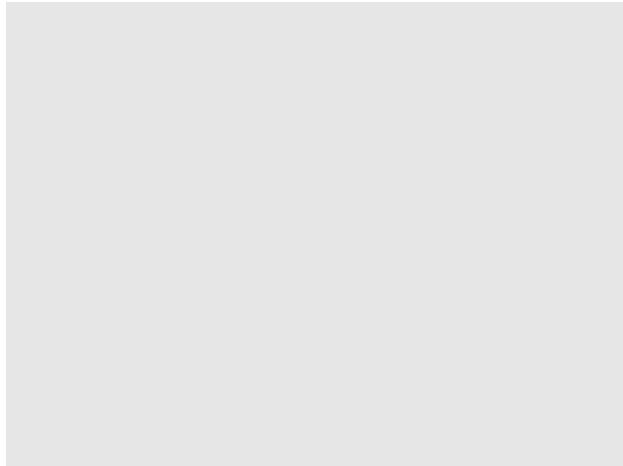
“I will not say that my beers are everyday beers,” said Metz. “Most of them are not ones you'd want to sit down with regularly, just with how limited they are as far as high price points go and the complexity. An approachable beer is one you don't have to think about too much because there are no over-the-top ingredients.”

Metz figures, where's the fun in that? Especially when the production process is so tedious. Typically, beer ferments for at least three months, sometimes up to a year, before it sees any added fruit ingredients. Once

the fruit is introduced to the beer, it can take another few months for that combination to re-ferment with the new sugars, yeast, and bacteria.

Then there's the packaging, which consists of adding another yeast strain and sugar solution, adding another three months to a year to the timeline.

"Certain fruits, like strawberries and blueberries, can give off a rubbery flavor when they're fermented," Metz said. "We've been playing with juicing the fruit first and splitting up the blend so one part only gets the juice, the other part gets the seeds, and just doing what we have to do to achieve the right flavor profile."



A spacious patio is available for outdoor seating at Black Rose Blending Co.
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Metz works with grapes for Black Rose's Piquette: Merlot (\$13 for a 750 mL bottle, also on draft) and Extra Purple (\$20). A more "approachable, everyday beer" option, according to Metz, is his unfruited, oak-aged, sour Hausbier with farmhouse ale.

"That's our beer in its simplest form," said Metz. "There's no fruit, no dry hopping, no extra barrel aging. But it's still a nerdy beer that takes a long time to make."

Black Rose Blending is not only an outlet for Metz's passion for fermentation and mixology, but also for art. Metz does all his own artwork for the labels, hand-drawing or scrapbooking images to be scanned and put on the bottles. There's also a roughly nine-by-nine foot artwork in progress by Metz on one of the walls in Black Rose Blending's tasting room.

"I've always been into mixed media collage," said Metz, whose building also rotates through monthly exhibitions and random pop-ups for local artists. "This is my multifaceted creative outlet."

Metz is currently brainstorming labels for Black Rose Blending's new drink releases coming out this month, including a fresh dandelion beer fermented in steel, made with dandelions Metz picked himself. "Meadows" will be the company's only steel-fermented beer and one of his brighter brews.

Official dates have yet to be released for the new bottles. With new drafts being produced almost monthly, Metz encourages checking Black Rose's social media (@blackroseblendingco) to get updates. Joining the pinball league is also an option.

To submit an idea for coverage, contact food editor Lindsay Christians at lchristians@captimes.com.

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Black Rose Blending Co.

1602 Gilson St.

(608) 284-7377

blackroseblendingco.com

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Sunday 12-7 p.m.

Monday-Tuesday closed

Wednesday-Thursday 4-9 p.m.

Friday 3-9 p.m.

Saturday 12-9 p.m.

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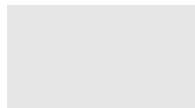
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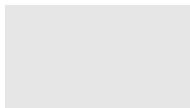
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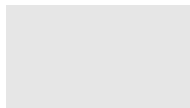
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