

Beverage Tourism Trade is Brewing in Somerset County, N.J.

Central Jersey County is Home to Growing Beer Brewing, Brew Pub and Wine Making Industry



Bridgewater, Oct 26, 2018 ([IssueWire.com](http://www.IssueWire.com)) - Residents and visitors to Somerset County are enjoying the growing beverage tourism trade that's gaining popularity in central New Jersey. Beer and wine enthusiasts have many opportunities to learn about how their favourite alcoholic beverages are produced (and make some themselves) and to sample local and regional brands at various venues.

Dr. Donna Albano, associate professor of hospitality & tourism management at Stockton University, has been tracking and studying the growth of breweries and distilleries; she writes frequently on the subject and contributed to the two-volume book, "Craft Beverages and Tourism." She said that traveling to experience craft beverage tourism where wine, beer, cider and craft spirits are produced is a fast-emerging N.J. experience.

"There is a strong connection between craft beverages and tourism as the public's interest in local, artisanal production has gained momentum," said Albano. "This focus has helped create another unique tourist experience. People are designing more tourist trips around wineries, craft breweries and distilleries and in New Jersey, we are seeing an uptick in beverage tourism as groups come to wine, dine and stay in the area."

Small-batch craft breweries are becoming big business

According to the Brewers Association, the trade association for small and independent craft brewers, there were 90 craft breweries in New Jersey producing 139,562 barrels in 2017; these breweries contributed nearly \$1.7 billion to the state's economy in 2016.

A survey conducted by the Brewers Association several years ago revealed that more than 10 million people toured craft breweries in 2014, and more than half of those visitors were from outside the destination. In addition, 18 percent of craft beer drinkers visit three or more out-of-town breweries each year.

Downtown Somerville is home to two popular beer events hosted by Tapastre and sister restaurant [Project P.U.B.](#)—a Craft Beer Fest in the summer and an Oktoberfest celebration in the fall. Project P.U.B. ("popup brewpub") is a unique brewpub concept featuring a tap takeover from a single craft beer brewery for an entire month; the brewpub also serves a rotating menu customized to pair with that month's beer selections, using freshly sourced ingredients. [Tapastre](#) offers a broad array of tapas and American fare with a rotating selection of craft beers.

Coming to downtown Somerville in December is Village Brewing Company, a craft brewery and brewpub that will feature an enormous bar, live music, and event space to host its own social events and that the public can rent for parties.

At Northside Lounge in Manville, patrons can try scores of beers from the venue's own Brooks Brewery, Manville's first microbrewery, as well as domestic and international brewers—plus wine, spirits and food, pub games and music. Northside Lounge was nominated as one of New Jersey's Best Craft Beer Bars by the Star-Ledger and NJ.com (2015).

A hobby for three brothers became [Flounder Brewing Co.](#), a Hillsborough craft brewery that produces just three barrels at a time. Recognized for its unique beers throughout the region and sold at local restaurants and bars, Flounder Brewing Co. was named one of Food & Wine's "50 amazing nanobreweries in 50 states." It offers monthly tours and tastings at its facility.

Oenophiles' paradise

[Sky Acres Winery](#) in Far Hills recently added “New Jersey Winery of the Year 2018” from the New York International Wine Competition to its wall of awards. Sky Acres’ wines, which are available in local retail outlets, are made with a proprietary, automated fermentation process that uses a disposable plastic liner in which the grapes are fermented and pressed. The sustainable process does not leave anything to clean afterwards, conserving water and protecting local waterways. Sky Acres holds a fall open house in early October, where visitors learn about the GOfermentor™ process and Smartbarrel™ aging system, and can sample wines for purchase. Wine tastings are also available at the Bedminster Fall Fest in October or by appointment by emailing info@skyacreswinery.com

In Ringoes in neighboring Hunterdon County, [Old York Cellars](#) is set among some of New Jersey’s oldest vineyards. Its satellite Wine Bar & Gift Shop at Bridgewater Commons Mall offers tastings, light bites, a full wine selection and wine gifts for purchase, and a lounge area for seating and events. In 2013, in response to Hurricane Sandy’s effects on New Jerseyans, Old York Cellars launched its What Exit Wines, and donates proceeds from every bottle sold to New Jersey-based charities.

For those who prefer a hands-on approach, [WineMakers of Somerset](#) in Bound Brook offers winemaking classes for individuals and groups taught by master winemakers. It also hosts wine tastings and its own special events. The venue, a historic brick factory building, is available to rent for private parties. At Grape Expectations in Bridgewater, participants experience the complete process of creating their own wine, using up to 25 varieties of grapes.

“New Jersey’s non-shore counties generated 52 percent of the state’s tourism revenues in 2017, with an increase in visitor spending led by the food and beverage category,” said Jacqueline Morales, Somerset County’s director of tourism. “We’re delighted to see so much growth in the beverage sector in Somerset County, as local residents and visitors are discovering the great craft beers and unique wines being made right here in the heart of New Jersey.”

More information is available at www.visitsomersetnj.org.

About Somerset County Tourism

Somerset County Tourism, a 501(c)3 organization, is the official destination marketing organization (DMO) for Somerset County, N.J. a and a Division of the Somerset County Business Partnership. Its mission is to advance the local economy by sustainably promoting the area’s outstanding travel products and experiences, and to offer a variety of useful services to residents, business travellers and leisure visitors. Somerset County Tourism is an active member of New Jersey Destination Marketing Organizations and the New Jersey Tourism Industry Association. For more information visit www.visitsomersetnj.org or call 908-218-4300, ext. 28.



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Source : Somerset County Tourism

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