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Entrepreneurial alumni turn passion for wine and beer into profit

By Sue Bowness

A NOT-SO-SECRET CRUSH

When **Jamieson Kerr, Hospitality and Tourism Management '89**, is asked to name a favourite wine, he rhymes off not one, but four kinds. With an impressive resumé that includes stints at the famous Willi's Wine Bar in Paris and a wine shop in London, it is not surprising that Jamieson now owns the successful Crush Wine Bar in downtown Toronto. He describes the French bistro-style restaurant with passion. "It's not just about the wine, it's about everything. We have a lovely old space with lots of natural light. It has a great atmosphere."

Although Jamieson had wanted to open a restaurant before attending Ryerson, he credits his program with teaching him how to write a business plan. That ability led him to several business ventures, including his own wine company and finally Crush in 2002. Rather than focusing exclusively on connoisseurs, however, Crush enables every customer to learn about wine in a relaxed environment. "Each month, we offer 30 wines by the glass and feature a particular grape or country. That way, people have the opportunity to try, for example, the same grape from six different countries or eight wines from one region. They all taste a little different based on the vineyards or the winemaker."

crushwinebar.com



CHEERS!

HOME BREW

Joe Tuer, Business Management '93, sounds like a proud parent when describing the first beer from his microbrewery, Stratford Brewing Company (SBC). "Stratford Pilsner came out Aug. 12, 2004 and since then our business has grown steadily." The pilsner is now on tap at many bars and restaurants in Stratford, London and Toronto, and is bottled and distributed through the Liquor Control Board of Ontario.

Joe's winding road to craft brewery management began after graduation. Working out of his hometown of Stratford, he started at the Canadian branch of a Fortune 500 company based in the United States. He then moved to smaller organizations, eventually living in Singapore for more than three years. It was there he decided to return home and open his own business. "My wife said, 'You've always wanted to open a brewery; why don't we try and make that happen?'" he recalls. The couple saved up, developed a business plan, purchased brewery equipment online and moved home to launch SBC.

Today, sales of Stratford Pilsner have quadrupled and, in time, SBC may produce seasonal beers to complement the playbill at the Stratford Festival. Even with his success, however, Joe continues to rely on lessons from his Ryerson Accounting, Finance and Marketing courses. "I still pull out my textbooks every once in a while."

stratfordbrewing.com



Photographed by David Evans.

Sommelier Sandi Marques. For a photo of her at work, please see the print version of *Alumni* magazine.

GOOD KARMA

Sommelier **Sandi Marques, Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) '95**, helps others savour life's simple pleasures. Through her business, Cork and Karma, Sandi uses her passion for wine to advise novice and seasoned collectors, run a tasting club and offer private wine education courses.

She credits her Portuguese family – and a father who made wine in the garage – for helping to develop her appreciation of vino. "Given my heritage, the fact that I loved to cook and had a hotel and restaurant background, becoming a sommelier was a natural progression for me." Upon completing the HTM program, Sandi worked at such places as Courtyard by Marriott Downtown Toronto and Langdon Hall Country House Hotel in Cambridge, Ont. After earning a culinary diploma from George Brown College, Sandi then pursued accreditation through the International Sommelier Guild.

Now based in St. Lazare, Que., she offers traditional wine tastings and imaginative events, such as a champagne tasting brunch to coincide with the Wimbledon tennis championships. For Sandi, however, her mission is more than just to educate people's palates. "Wine is a metaphor for enjoying life. If you can appreciate wine in a glass, you can actually take time to appreciate other things in life: friends, family and a good meal."

corkandkarma.com

