

Cocktail farm looks to open Wilkeson bar and shop

BY RAY MILLER-STILL
Editor

You've probably heard of the "farm to table concept" — locally sourced meats, fruits, and vegetables served up fresh, bought straight from the producer instead of through a distributor.

But what about "from garden to glass"? That's the business model of Simple Goodness Sisters Venise Cunningham and Belinda Kelly, bringing together (mostly) regionally-grown ingredients and distilled spirits to make one-of-a-kind cocktails.

Until recently, Cunningham and Kelly operated their own separate businesses, with the former in Buckley running the Simple Goodness Farm and its Goats and Garlic festival since 2013 (now on hiatus), and the latter operating the Happy Camper Cocktail

Co., a mobile bar-and-bartender service, founded in 2016. But after an incident where all of Cunningham's seeds went bad, she decided to take her farm in a different direction.

"I was ready to try something different," she said. "But then I had this whole field where I was like, what am I going to do with this now?"

Her sister provided the solution — grow edible flowers and various herbs for her traveling tavern.

Now instead of garlic, Cunningham's field is awash with both traditional and unique cocktail ingredients, from mint and rosemary to bachelor buttons and beets.

What Cunningham can't grow herself, she sources from other local farms, while Kelly sources spirits from regional distilleries.

Take for example one of Happy Camper's

most popular spring drinks, The Genevieve — a choice of gin or vodka, mixed with lemon juice, prosecco, and a rhubarb-vanilla bean syrup, a recipe of the sisters' design.

While the original syrup flavor makes for a unique drink, that also means folks couldn't go home and make it themselves.

"I would begin to explain the recipes, including that they would need to make the mixers like the simple syrup from scratch by infusing fruits and herbs into sugar and water," Kelly recalled in an email interview. "It's an easy process, but I would watch as I explained, and slowly, their eyes glazed over and it was very clear they weren't going to ever make it for themselves. Inevitably their next question would be, 'Can we just buy the mixers?' That's when the idea to bottle our most popular garden to glass mixers took hold."



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Belinda Kelly, left, and her sister Venise Cunningham, right, are the co-owners of the Simple Goodness Sisters.

Unique offerings at Magickal Earth

BY KEVIN HANSON
Senior Writer

Aiming to create a "unique boutique," owners Janet Barto and Christina Barger have launched The Magickal Earth in downtown Enumclaw.

The two debuted their

shop Aug. 3 at 1618 Railroad Ave.

Guests at the new venture will find a selection of crystals, handmade items crafted by local artists and CBD products that are allnatural and free of THC. On the way are workshops addressing topics like sound

healing, meditation, reiki and more.

Phone: 360-226-3373
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Hours: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.



But the process was much more than just simply bottling their syrups to sell, Cunningham said, and it took a while for the two of them to learn all the legislation behind making their product "shelf-stable" and find a way to produce larger quantities of their syrup.

Now the sisters have developed six simple syrups to sell on a seasonal basis, plus seed packages for people to start their own "garden to glass" setups, and most

See FARM, Page 10

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Farm

From Page 3

they are experimenting with edible flower salt- and sugar-rim mixes, which are expected to be in their online store over the holiday season.

Their success has led some of their products to be sold in a few chains, like PCC Community Markets and New Seasons in Seattle.

But even though Kelly, an Enumclaw local, has her mobile trailer, state law prevents her from just driving up to a busy street corner and serving drinks. This means many people, especially locals, may often see the trailer out of the road, but won't have a chance to taste her concoctions unless they are invited to an event where she's serving, or host an event themselves.

What they needed, they decided, is a bar.

Luckily, the two were thinking ahead, having purchased the Skeek's cafe building in Wilkeson in 2017 for this very purpose.

Wilkeson may seem like an odd place to open a bar, especially with the popular Pick and Shovel already very established, but Cunningham and Kelly had their hearts set on the town of roughly 500 people.

"We have a long-standing love for old things and things with history, and when we drove through Wilkeson the first time, I saw this gem of a little town that was beginning to be revitalized

by local business owners," Kelly wrote, referring to Nomad PNW coffee and The Carlson Block pizza restaurant, whose owners are young like Kelly and Cunningham. "I just wanted to be a part of that because I love the idea of bringing something back to life... to be a part of a town that loves its past, while bringing in new spaces and services that welcome and support the community that lives there."

Although they already own the building, there's a fair amount of work that needs to be done to bring it up to code.

Cunningham and Kelly have already secured some donated labor and materials, Cunningham said, but there are some incidentals they need help with.

That's why the sisters have started a Kickstarter, asking their fans and local community to help them raise \$15,000 by the end of September.

KICKSTARTING THE BAR

For those not familiar with Kickstarter, it's a crowd-funding platform that asks people to donate to a project or cause. It's not all a one-way street — donors can receive various rewards for their contribution, depending on how much they give.

For example, a donation of \$25 would get your name permanently displayed on the walls of the future Simple Goodness Sisters building. But if you can donate \$6,500, the Simple Goodness Farm will play host for your wedding, which includes a 3-hour rehearsal dinner, 12-hour wedding event, a Happy

Camper service package, and much more (including having the farm's goats be your ring bearer or flower girl, if you so wish).

If the goal isn't reached by Sept. 27, though, the money is returned to the donors, leaving the Simple Goodness Sisters to try and finance their project another way.

If the project is funded, Cunningham said donors should expect their business to be much, much different than the usual bar scene.

"Both of us are really invested... [in] this idea of challenging the stereotypical thought of a bar," she said.

Kelly noted they have a strong women following, likely because Happy Camper and Simple Goodness Sisters have carved out their own unique image.

"When I became a mother, I didn't lose my desire to have a delicious cocktail, but I did acquire a whole new set of needs related to my kids, 'cause we like to do life as a family," she wrote. "With our syrups you can make a craft cocktail that's restaurant worthy but easily created at home. This appeals a lot to the families, particularly women, who follow us online because kids go to bed early, and babysitters are a splurge, but they savor that moment of unwinding, celebrating, and sharing that happy hour brings."

And surprisingly, Happy Camper also has a strong sober community following, as Kelly serves non-alcoholic drinks made with the same "garden to glass" ingredients.

"The syrups make fantastic mocktails that taste and feel very grown up, versus a virgin



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Cocktails balance the flavor of spirits (alcohol), sweet (syrups), bitter (bitters), and sour (citrus or shrubs). Dilution can be an important component as well. Some of these components, like the spruce tips in the Simple Goodness Sisters' huckleberry-spruce tip syrup, are harvested at the Simple Goodness Farm with other various herbs and garnishes for Happy Camper cocktails, while other ingredients are outsourced locally.

strawberry daiquiri that tastes like a strawberry smoothie, because there's just sugar in it," Cunningham said. "It doesn't require alcohol to have a good drink and to feel like you're celebrating something."

With all this in mind, Kelly and Cunningham want to make their bar/shop a family-friendly venue.

"When I do go out with my kids, it's often a struggle. I dream about stools in restrooms, play areas, kid-friendly snack menus, etc., and these kid-friendly spaces just don't exist outside of IKEA," she wrote. "I want delicious and pretty cocktails with low ABV and mocktail options, a well-lit space that feels safe, and... to have a drink in a space that feels like a community,

like I'm hanging out with my friends at a park or a coffee shop. That's the kind of spot we dream about creating in person with our brick and mortar. If we can do that I'll feel really successful."

If luck is on their side, Cunningham and Kelly hope to open the bar by spring 2020.

To learn more about the Simple Goodness Sisters and their online shop, visit www.simple-goodness-sisters.mybigcommerce.com/; for the Happy Camper Cocktail Co., head to www.happy-campercocktailcompany.com/; and finally, to donate to their Kickstarter, pop by www.kickstarter.com/projects/sgsisters/simple-goodness-sisters-shop.

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