

BUSINESS FOCUS

COUPON QUEEN

When buying a large appliance

When you need to purchase an appliance for your home, what does your research process look like? Do you read reviews or visit a store to choose from a selection of models?

You may even ask friends or family members for feedback on the appliances they're currently using.

Nine years ago, we replaced our traditional, agitator-style washing machine with a front-loading washer that promised to be more energy-efficient.

Our former washer worked fine, but it was a small-wash-tub model purchased before our three children were born.

Once we were doing laundry for five, the larger capacity of a new machine seemed alluring, and we went to an appliance store to pick out a new washer.

Shortly after the new washing machine arrived, I realized it wasn't quite as reliable as my older one.

While it definitely used both less water and less detergent, the new machine didn't get the clothes nearly as clean as my old washing machine did.

I started keeping a bucket in the laundry tub to pour extra water into the machine before running it.

Even so, this machine has never done a good job of getting stains out of laundry, and I've ended up hand-washing anything particularly dirty.

Just 18 months after this washer's one-year warranty was up, an error code appeared on the machine's screen noting that an electronic water sensor had failed.

A call to a repair center yielded a \$300 estimate to come fix the part – that's half the price we paid for this \$599 machine!

I ordered the \$94 sensor and replaced it myself with the help of a YouTube video.

Over the next five years, the same part failed two more times, and I continued replacing sensors.

Last month, the electronic motherboard for our washing machine failed, and the price of a replacement board is more than \$300.

I decided to return to a traditional, top-loader washing machine. After much research, I chose a commercial model that's popular with laundromats and has an estimated lifespan of 25 years.

While I realize that returning to a traditional washer means the machine will use 26 gallons of water instead of the seven gallons our current front-loader uses, I am also confident that returning to this kind of washer will clean clothing better than the front-loader did.

For me, the extra expenses of using more water and detergent are worth it to get our clothes clean once again.

I had an interesting conversation with the sales representative at our appliance store as well.

He said that most new washing machines are designed with a six-year lifespan in mind.

I was shocked by this – the front-loading washer we're replacing is already considered "old" at nine years of age.

The salesperson said that many consumers are used to upgrading things every few years and are ready for new features, such as internet connectivity, cellphone notification when a load is complete and the ability to automatically order more detergent online when the current supply runs out.

These consumers don't necessarily see replacing large appliances as a negative, because they're "upgrading."

I'm in a different place though – I want something reliable that will last.



JILL CATALDO



TIM CARL PHOTOGRAPHY

Co-owners of Napa Valley's Sawhorse Ciders and makers of hard cider: from left to right, Jeff Sharp, Jason Price, Erik Goodmanson, Jay Turnipseed and Will Drayton.

Sawhorse Ciders

Napa winemakers branch out to apples

TIM CARL

Although his days are spent with high-tech gadgets all meant to improve a wine's quality and profitability, Will Drayton's off time is in pursuit of something less futuristic – hand-crafting small lots of locally picked apples into "hard" cider.

"I have always loved cider," Drayton said.

"When I first moved to America in 2005 there were a bunch of apple trees where we were staying and all the fruit was just falling to the ground, so I started making cider and I found it to be pretty intriguing."

Drayton, who grew up south of London, England, has always had a fond appreciation for fermented beverages, and that interest led him into the world of winemaking.

After college in his native country, Drayton moved to California, where he obtained a master's degree in agriculture from UC Davis in 2009.

Since then, he's worked with Treasury Wine Estates, eventually becoming its director of technical viticulture and research winemaking.

Since his first experiments, Drayton has made apple cider every year, refining and expanding his collection of like-minded cider enthusiasts so that by 2014 he and his cohort had grown to five.

"We met during a cider tasting, and I roped Jason (Price, assistant winemaker at Robert Craig Winery) into it at first," Drayton said.

"My wife [Ellen] was happy I had someone else to help press the apples, and by the end of that year we had a cider tasting. Three



SUBMITTED IMAGE

Sawhorse Ciders are made by hand-crafting small lots of locally picked apples into "hard" cider.

other locals showed up and were, like, 'Dude, we love this and we want to help out.' So we thought, well, why not just make a company out of it?"

And they did, forming Sawhorse Ciders with five young partners, each with experience in fermentation science and each with a keen interest in exploring more than just grapes.

The five partners include Erik Goodmanson (assistant winemaker at Bouchaine Vineyards), Jeff Sharp (brewer of beer) and Jay Turnipseed (winemaker at the Rutherford Wine Co.).

Cider popularity growing

The popularity of hard ciders continues to grow. According to Forbes, often citing Neilson data, interest in regional craft-cider producers has gained the attention of younger drinkers who are looking for a lower-alcohol alternative to wine and spirits.

Most ciders fall between 5 percent and 8 percent alcohol,

whereas wine is often anywhere from 9 percent to 15 percent.

Sawhorse is available on premise at local restaurants and bars, but the group has plans to sell bottles of their cider at some point in the future.

Finding apples in a sea of grapes

As the demand grows, the Sawhorse crew continues to seek out sources for locally grown apples.

"We've planted some of our own trees, but most of our apples come from small growers that might only have one or a few trees," Drayton said. "That means that we spend a lot of time traveling around and picking mostly in Napa and Sonoma."

The goal, according to Price, is to keep local apple sources that represent a range of flavors and profiles to help build complexity and texture, which can often be found in older orchards.

Sawhorse Cider

More information can be found on their website, sawhorseciders.com. Sawhorse cider can currently be found at Norman Rose Tavern, Palisades Saloon and La Taberna, all of which are in Napa.

Cider making is similar to making white wine

At present, the Sawhorse Ciders team is making a blend of their various lots. As with many winemakers, the cider is made in small batches from separate orchards.

Made in the manner of white wine, the apples are brought into the cidery (at this point actually the Robert Craig Winery), where they are washed and allowed to rest until being ground (scratted) and then put through a press and fermented.

"It's a lot like winemaking," Turnipseed said. "We're all pretty good at fermenting and blending stuff, and so we're always trying to make something that's really a harmonious whole, which is what I think we've done. Our cider is different than most in that it's really just pure fruit expression – it doesn't have a ton of oak, if any; the flavor profile is clean and fresh."

Experimenting, refining

"Like the early days of winemaking in California, we are experimenting and refining our approach as we go along, but, to me, our recent vintages are really nailing it – I'd hate to change things too much, because I am really happy with what we have at this point," Price said.

Carneros Resort reopens spa

\$3.5 million spent on spa renovation

FOR THE REGISTER

Carneros Resort and Spa, a luxury 28-acre property in Napa Valley, completed its \$3.5 million spa renovation and has reopened.

The Spa at Carneros Resort's renovation transforms the 5,919-square-foot space, including a new spa entrance, airy guest reception and retail space, expanded relaxation area, as well as newly-designed treatment rooms and suites, said a news release.

"We are constantly striving to enhance the guest experience at Carneros Resort and Spa and offer the highest quality amenities in Napa Valley," said Edward Costa, managing director of the resort.

"The spa renovations reflect the resort coming full circle since its rebranding and renovations in 2016 and is the last piece to establishing the property's identity as



SPA AT CARNEROS

The Spa at Carneros Resort has reopened after a \$3.5 million renovation.

a 'destination resort.'"

Designed by Oakland-based firm Nina Chiappa Interiors and design firm TLCD Architecture, the Spa at Carneros Resort's new, "stylistic architectural elements, finishes and fixtures exemplify a

sophisticated modern farmhouse design."

The spa's outdoor entrance is adorned with a Mediterranean-style garden complete with a central water fountain, benches, lounge chairs and a beautifully

planted trellis. The spa interior features elements of rift-cut stained oak, ivory-colored walls, limestone patterned floors, chevron pattern oak cabinets, and black iron accents.

Upon entering the spa, a 26-foot open ceiling exposes a center tower, "creating a dramatic visual experience that balances the farmhouse architecture."

The Spa at Carneros Resort has nine indoor treatment rooms, including a new couple's suite and a specialty studio suite.

The couple's suite features a private outdoor deck, soaking tub and solarium shower, while the specialty suite boasts its own sauna, indoor shower and a private covered porch.

Each treatment room is outfitted with light wood flooring, new massage tables, furnishings and equipment and "colored with deep soothing green tones."

Info: 707-299-4850. Spa services start at \$120.