

# Quarantine Homebrew Boom

*Keystone Homebrewing Supply  
Experiencing Major Uptick in Those  
Looking to Make their Own Beer and  
Wine While Stuck at Home During the  
Pandemic*

MONTGOMERYVILLE, PA, UNITED STATES, April 27, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Jason Harris, who launched his Keystone Homebrew Supply on Thanksgiving of 1992 with the goal of providing quality beer and wine making supplies along with expert advice to consumers who wanted to produce their own beer wines at home, is seeing a major boom in homebrewing supplies and equipment as well as wine fermenting kits, since the Coronavirus socialization restrictions were implemented in Pennsylvania in March.



Keystone Homebrew Founder Jason Harris

While beer distributors in the state have remained open, it is still somewhat difficult for many people to go out and get their favorite beers, not to mention the stress many are experiencing from just leaving their homes during the stay-at-home orders. In addition, people are looking for new "quarantine projects" to help the time go by. That's where Keystone Homebrew Supply comes in.

“

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*Jason Harris*

"Like everyone else, we can't wait for things to return to normal," said Harris. "We've had to implement strict new protocols to ensure the safety our families, friends and customers. For the hobby, though, the quarantine measures have been a boon. We're seeing a perfect storm of elements that have brought us consumers looking for

projects to occupy their time, and beer and wine lovers who want to continue to drink but don't want to spend a lot of money. Furthermore, with this being a time of significant financial uncertainty, this gives people the opportunity to enjoy beer or wine at home at a fraction of the cost that typically comes with going to their local craft brewery, distributor, bottle shop or liquor store."

Harris got his start with homebrewing early in the movement, making his first batch in high school in the late 1980s. He brewed all through college, and even started a homebrew club (Wort's Up?) at the University of Vermont, where he graduated from with a BS in Biology in 1991. By 1992, he launched a new homebrew store in Montgomeryville, PA. From then on, Harris saw double-digit increases in sales virtually every year through 2013. In 2004 he expanded to a second location in Bethlehem PA, and by 2011, he needed a larger space, and moved into his current 24,000 square-foot building located at 435 Doylestown Road, less than a mile from his

original location. But by 2013, homebrewing had peaked and started to decline due to what Harris refers to as "a craft brewery or brewpub opening in just about every town in the region," and was forced to close his Bethlehem store, which had thrived for fifteen years.

"The rise of small breweries, online shopping, YouTube video tutorials and Amazon contributed to a steady decline in Keystone's sales of homebrewing supplies beginning in 2014 and through the beginning of 2020," said Harris. "The world changed practically overnight this March.

Homebrewing takes time, and people are generally in a rush. This process is more deliberate: you need to select ingredients, make time to brew,

ferment and bottle, and it's a considerably longer process. When people are unemployed or at home, they have more time, so we're seeing a lot of people returning to homebrewing and newcomers trying to get creative by trying their hand at this fun and rewarding hobby."



Jason Harris

While the cost of beer and wine can get fairly high in bars, specialty stores and online, the yield for an average beer at home is less than \$1 per pint. A really good "hopped up IPA" costs as little as \$1 per pint compared to twice or three times that at a beer distributor or \$6 to \$10 at a bar or restaurant. The wine-making kits which Keystone Homebrew sells can yield 30 bottles of wine for a \$60-\$70 investment (\$2 per bottle!), or up to \$200 (\$6-\$7 per bottle), depending on quality.

While Harris' overall sales may have been dragged down due to a social distancing drop in the sale of kegs and accessories, the sale of brewing equipment is up 90 percent, and sales of hop rhizomes, grains, yeast, and bottles are a combined 35 percent higher.

Harris, who also owns Stone & Key Cellars — a winery whose volume is more than 30,000 gallons per year, said that he "has assisted more than 100 professional brewers learn their craft when they were homebrewing, before they raised capital to open their own brewpubs or microbreweries, or became professional brewers." And he still assists many of them sourcing their ingredients due to his purchasing power.

"With the homebrew business, one thing we loved in the early days was working directly with consumers," said Harris, "but we're experiencing less interaction with people lately because of the quarantine. Online sales are growing nicely, but with no customers shopping in the store, there's considerably less face-to-face interaction and consultation, which we miss. I built the business assisting homebrewers in producing really incredible products that helped many of them raise money to launch award-winning small breweries. Now it seems we're assisting people gain new skills to help get them through one of the most difficult times in their lives. Who knows, maybe one of our new homebrewers will become a future Great American Beer Festival medalist, which will definitely be a silver (or gold) lining that comes from this moment in time."

Learn more about Keystone Homebrew Supply by visiting <http://keystonehomebrew.com>. Learn more about Stone & Key Cellars by visiting <http://stoneandkeycellars.com>.

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