

R.A.V.E. Entrepreneur Honorees



Ann Fahy-Gust and Tessa Leung

Co-Founders of SouthxSouthEast Minnesota Brewing Company



Congratulations to Ann Fahy-Gust and Tessa Leung of South x Southeast Minnesota Brewing Company, 2020 R.A.V.E. (Recognizing Awarding Valuing Entrepreneurs) Honorees

Ann and Tessa recently opened South x Southeast Minnesota Brewing Company in Pine Island, Minnesota. Ann has been a master brewer for more than 30 years, and Tessa is former owner for Grand Rounds Brewery in Rochester. The two purchased and renovated the former Pine Cheese Mart building and opened for business in September 2020.

South x Southeast's flagship products include Blonde Ale, Golden Ale, Red Ale, Light Amber Ale, Scottish Ale and Stout. They have four seasonal beers including: Spring – Maibock, Summer – Light, Fall – Golden Brown, and Winter – Spicy Winter Warmer. Tessa and Ann's goals are to fill the needs of the SEMN area restaurants, caterers, and off sale markets by being consistently available, of high quality, and craft beer affordable. Currently, their beer can be found in 19 locations, on tap or in can, throughout southeastern Minnesota bars and restaurants.

Why did you decide to start your business in Pine Island and pick this location?

When we started looking for business locations that would fit our business model, Pine Island was really encouraging. It was clear that they saw a fit for this business in their community. The location is iconic – As Pine Cheese Mart previously, many folks would have come here with their parents for a sandwich, ice cream or cheese. This made the location ideal in the sense that it was already well known.

What has been the most challenging part of starting your business?

COVID happening was a difficult challenge – much of the state went to working from home so supply chains lost continuity, things got dropped or lost, state permits were difficult to complete and finding a real person to talk to about concerns became nearly impossible. Some things are difficult to resolve over the internet and phone.

Do you have plans to expand this business regionally? If so, what are the plans?

Currently, our region is South East Minnesota. We defined a 100-mile radius around our brewery; basically, Faribault to Red Wing down the river to the border across the border to I35 and back to Faribault. We think that's enough for us right now.

What is your advice to entrepreneurs getting started with a new business?

Be sure you have plenty of funding – it always costs more than you expect. Know your market and study it face-to-face – don't assume anything. Plan, plan, plan and stick to the plan – don't be distracted by shiny objects.

Learn more about South x Southeast at www.sxsebrewingmn.com