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SIT AND SIP A WHILE

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By Heather Rule

One of the most common questions 1910 Sip House owners Jeff and Karen Lees get from new customers is “What kind of beers do you have?” They’ll respond by saying they don’t have any beer. The 1910 Sip House – located at 41714 Foursquare Rd. in Battle Lake – exclusively offers hard cider for its customers. About 80 percent of their customers haven’t had hard cider before, according to the Lees. “You almost feel like a broken record when you’re explaining it,” Jeff Lees said. “It’s been fun to educate.”

They only sell cider and have refined their main base cider – called Ethel’s dry named after Ethel Lake where the 1910 Sip House sits – over the past year, making a few changes and tweaks. They offer a rotation of about a dozen different flavors of cider that are all derived from the main Ethel’s dry.



College students will spend time at the 1910 Sip House, hooking up to the venue’s Wi-Fi, ordering a cider and spending the afternoon working on their homework,

Jeff Lees said. “It’s a good quiet, fun space to hang out,” Jeff Lees said. “We almost have a coffee-shop vibe to it, but it’s hard cider.”

There’s plenty of outdoor space for customers to enjoy their cider. Like on the patio and picnic tables under a big oak tree, or people can bring their own chairs for the casual, comfortable, relaxing atmosphere. The 1910 Sip House also brings in live music and a food truck during the summer months.

Karen Lees grew up in the area and is a Fergus Falls graduate. She met her husband Jeff in Colorado, and they loved visiting Otter Tail County each summer for the past 25 years. Now that they live in Minnesota, they wanted an opportunity to live and work together on their own property. “Then we thought, ‘well, this is lakes country. Let’s do something completely unusual, throw up a grain bin and let’s sell cider, see how the public reacts to it around here,’” Jeff Lees said.

The 1910 Sip House, which opened in October 2020, has quite a unique look to the building. The Lees erected a grain bin and did all the finishing work themselves. The grain-bin 1910 Sip House is 36 feet in diameter and 20 feet tall. “It’s almost a destination for some folks,”

Jeff lees said. "I don't know if they're even interested in the cider [at first], they just wanted to see the facility."

A big barn was on the property, which was so dilapidated that they had to take it down. But they also saved the hay door, and it now hangs inside the bin. The barn was originally built in 1901 and painted in 1910, so "1910" was painted on the barn door. "So we just decided that's going to have to be part of the name," Karen Lees said. "1910. And then we just came up with Sip House."

They're open all year, generally Thursday through Sunday, minus a couple of weeks in February. The latest they're open is 8 p.m. People can stop in for cider or purchase off-sale cider bottles to take home. "We're just tremendously happy to be here," Jeff Lees said. "We like being a bit of a pioneer in this industry, in this area."

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