

# BREWING AND COOKING TO THEIR

# *Own Vibe*

Bank & Bridge celebrates its  
first delicious year in Mystic

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“It was always flip flops,” said Walt Bansley, proud owner of Bank & Bridge Brewing, now celebrating their first year in Mystic. With slick salt and pepper hair, jeans, an aloha shirt, and flip flops showing his blue-painted toes, Walt has come full circle. From the beaches of San Diego, to combat in the Middle East, to serving as a criminal defense lawyer, Walt is back to the vibe that he loves so much: surrounded by palm trees, Cali-Reggae music, great beer, great food, and great people.

Each element of that vibe is obvious when looking around the massive Bank & Bridge Brew Pub. There are, indeed, palm trees everywhere, reggae music playing, and homages to Walt’s life in the military via life-sized artworks of fellow marines and the brews Walt named after them. “I always knew that I wanted to honor all my buddies I served with in the Marine Corps,” says Walt. However, it wasn’t until 2019 when he realized how best to make that happen.

From 1997 to 2001 Walt served in the Marine Corps, rising from a 2nd Lieuten-

ant to Captain, and then left active duty after his deployment to the Middle East. Although he left to go to law school, he remained in the reserves for another four years until he became a criminal defense trial lawyer in 2004, which he still is to this day.

In 2019, however, he reached a crossroads and an aha moment! “I thought, ‘Walt, you own a badass, 8,000 sq. ft. log cabin on the main access road to the major southern Vermont ski resort of Mount Snow’ he says. “And, while it’s in a top five brewing state, there are no breweries around!” Being a lawyer came in handy as Walt managed the permitting and zoning process himself. A few months later, on October 4, 2019, he opened Snow Republic Brewery in West Dover, Vermont.

Despite the pandemic occurring during their first season, the Vermont brewery was successful, and Walt wanted to replicate that success with another project. He already owned the bank building in Mystic, using it as his law office. But he realized the building,



“I always knew that I wanted to honor all my buddies I served with in the Marine Corps,” says Walt. Those who serve in the military often earn nicknames, hence my beer names:

**The Joker** - The flagship pilsner is named after Marine Corps mate and Mystic native, Kevin Keating. The image is from when Keating was deployed in Iraq and received a battlefield promotion to the rank of Major. However, we just call Kevin the Joker.

**Shock-Hop-Alypse** - Named after Greg Szepe, aka Shock. The can art is him fighting through hops with the standard issue Marine Corps K-bar (knife) in his mouth.

**Grenade Wade** - Named after Leaf Wade. The can art of this Pale Ale is a silhouette of Leaf’s face inside a grenade.

**Sonny G** - Named after Jason Grancagnolo, a CH-53 helicopter pilot. The can art is him in a helicopter.

**Major B** - Latest to the list, and named after my father, Walter Bansley III, who served 20 years active duty in the Marine Corps.







with its majestic size and structure, would be the perfect spot for his next brewery. Now called Bank & Bridge, (B&B) the space honors what Walt says, “are arguably, the two most iconic structures in downtown Mystic - the Bank and the famous bascule bridge a baseball throw away.”

Unlike many breweries or beer halls, often drenched in dark wood and somewhat cavernous, B&B is a large, light, and airy open space. With an all-white interior save for the green of the palm trees and the chrome of the tanks, it certainly offers a fresh take on where to grab a beer. And by the way, “There’s a reason we’re a Brew Pub, not just a brewery,” Walt corrects. “The food is very much front and center.”

And that food? That “Get ‘Cha Face Dirty” food is crafted by Chef Josh Ulmer who has trained in places like Madison Square Garden and Nolo in New Haven.

**The Team’s Favorite B&B Beer and Burger Pairings:**

**Walt** - I like the classic Bank Burger and Mystic IPA. I would eat and drink this every day if Chef Josh and Brewer Jason could figure out a no-calorie version!

**Maggie** - The PB&J Burger and the Manatee Porter.

**Josh** - Ditto Walt. The Bank Burger and our Mystic IPA.

**Jason** - Our classic Bank Burger paired with our DIPA Transdimensional Pterodactyl is quite literally out of this world.

Walt reached out to Josh to start up the food program in Vermont and with the growing success there, the two knew B&B should bring Ulmer’s “from scratch”, very sauce-forward style to Mystic. After years of doing wine pairings, Josh says he was

Clockwise from top left: Chef Josh uses beer in numerous dishes; Josh, Walt, Maggie, & Jason; Josh enjoying his “Get ‘Cha Face Dirty” burgers; one of Jason’s babies, a brewing tank.





#### Walt's Playlist of Cali-Reggae

Cali-Reggae, a genre of reggae infused with Southern California rock, was popularized by Sublime, a pioneer of the sound out of Long Beach. Here are some of Walt's favorite bands you'll here at B&B:

- Rebellion** (playing June 22 at the Westville Music Bowl in New Haven)
- Soja**
- Stick Figure**
- Dirty Heads**
- Iya Terra**
- Fortunate Youth**
- Landon McNamara**

tentative at first but has changed his tune. "Now that I have been in the brewery world for the past couple years, I find myself drinking and pairing more with beer. I have endless amounts of beer to play and create with." From a Porter bacon jam and beer-battered onion rings to every dip or wing sauce in between, just about everything has been blended with a beer brewed at B&B.

Did someone say beer? From Beer'd in Stonington and Bad Sons in Derby, Jason Riggs has earned his chops as Head Brewer at B&B. In addition to starting out as a volunteer, he says, "I held every position [at Beer'd] from taproom to sales and from cellaring to brewing. I had a really unique introduction to it all. It started out with a passion for craft beer and the labor of love that went into it." And, although he studied history and sociology, he admits he is amazed at how much math and science he does every single day. One of the biggest differences Jason finds with B&B is how involved the team is with every piece of the operation and how nice it is to be able to control and create as he does in a smaller environment. "Working on a smaller team is really special to me because it really is a labor of love," Jason says. "Every part of this business has our fingerprints on it, and we get to interact with the guests. That acknowledgement of our efforts is a wild rush." At time of print, Jason talked about plans for barrel aging and making a sour using local mulberries and crab apples. He also said he was hoping to collaborate with Mystic Drawbridge Ice Cream and

perhaps a bakery for a sweeter, more dessert-like brew. Mystic seems to hold the crown of inventive community collaborations, which is a big part of the area's magic, so, we foresee Jason's sweet

dreams becoming a reality very soon.

When asked how Walt manages to juggle two breweries and a law practice, let alone fatherhood, all while maintaining his "chill" vibe, he attributes a lot to the crew he has created. "I learned a long time ago in the Marine Corps how to lead and delegate." He continues, "Fortunately for me, my GM Maggie Jacksin is unbelievable. She is the glue that keeps all of this together and I could not do this without her." Maggie came to B&B after thirteen years with both CT casinos, which is where she met Ulmer and B&B Sous Chef, Carlos Molina. Before joining B&B, she was the Assistant General Manager of Guy Fieri's Kitchen & Bar. As to Josh and Jason? "Both are truly artists at their crafts," Walt says. "We do not even have paper menus because I can't keep up with all the new beers Jason produces and all the crazy food creations from Chef Josh."

As they celebrate the end of their first year and look forward to their second, Walt gushes about the reception Bank & Bridge has received from the community so far, "I could not have asked for a better welcome to the neighborhood. We love it here!"

*Bank & Bridge is located at 54 W. Main in Mystic. IG @bankandbridge*



From left: Josh is big on seasonings and sauce; the team toasts with "Happy Birthday to Bank & Bridge!"