



Starling Lounge

BEN & LINDSEY FORCHE
ARE BREWING UP
SOMETHING SPECIAL AT
THE STARLING LOUNGE
IN BLISSFIELD

Photos and Story by Phil Eich,
Storyville Social, as part of the
Michigan Main Street Story
Series

“We actually opened up another shop across the street first, a really small space. We started with the coffee in November of 2018, and a year later, the building we’re in now became available.

Beer was actually the first idea —Ben has home brewed for almost a decade, since our kids were little, but then we had this idea of, ‘Wouldn’t it be cool to open a morning-to-night space and get more out of it?’ Not everybody drinks alcohol or drinks beer. Not everybody drinks coffee. But the community aspect with beer and coffee is kind of similar. We liked the intermingling of the two and saw other businesses with a similar

concept making it work, and we decided to combine the ideas.

But to do that we needed a lot more space, so we moved into this building in January of 2020 with no idea of what was about to start happening two months later. We were doing all kinds of build-outs in the space, putting in all this money, way more than we originally thought that we were going to have to do ... and then in March, everything shut down.

We had to shut everything down and halt all progress. We couldn’t get contractors and everything was at a standstill, so we used the time to refine

our plans. We changed a lot of them—building a lot of the stuff ourselves like the tables and the bar because we couldn't get contractors to come in and do them for us. It gave us more time to prepare without having to rush to open.

Thankfully, the people who own the building were super great, too. Somehow it serendipitously kind of just all worked out, and we were able to hold on until August of 2020 to open.

We're a full-service espresso bar with a beautiful La Marzocco machine and make gorgeous espresso drinks. We have drip coffee and espresso from Actual Coffee in Perrysburg, Ohio.

All of our baked goods are local and most of our ingredients are small-batch and organic. They're from Nourish Juicery & Kitchen and Emmy's Kitchen, both right here in Blissfield. Everything that we can do locally, we do, especially if there's somebody here in Blissfield who we can work with.

The brewery will open soon—everything is ready but we're delayed by the supply chain issues the rest of the world is experiencing, too. We have a 10-tap draft system: one for nitro cold brew, one for nitro beer tap, one regular kombucha and one CBD kombucha, and then we'll have at least six to seven beers on tap all the time.

The fears of opening a business in a small town are real, so we tried to make our investment doable and try to minimize our risk as much as possible. But we live here. Our kids go to school here. We did it for

people like us, who were going out of town for good coffee or good beer. We know a lot of people here, especially in our age group, who want things like this and want to support it. So, instead of sitting around complaining about the fact that there's nothing here, we decided to put something here ourselves and see how it does. We started in a small space with just coffee and kept our brewery production on the smaller side, and then built as we grew.

Blissfield is really diverse. It's like a melting pot. A lot of people think of Blissfield is a farming community, and it is, but a lot of that is changing. You have people our age, who have access to things in Toledo or Ann Arbor. We think there are people moving around a lot more than they used to in decades past. Since opening, we've seen a lot of new people and families that have moved into this community.

We also have new things popping up, like a new pool in the community. We have a lot of new shops like ours that are cropping up. There's an appeal and an attitude of people



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wanting to live here and be kind of on the cusp of what's coming.

The other thing is, and we see this quite often, we're really thankful for how well all the other businesses do as far as supporting one another. That's important in this small community, and everybody works together.

We're looking forward to what's coming and we're really anxious to start doing more food, expanding our hours, participating in events, hosting events. We've done some live music events that have been amazing and the community really comes out for them. It's so fun. It's what we love to do around creating a community space, so we're looking forward to being able to do more."

—Ben and Lindsey Forche,
Starling Lounge, Blissfield,
Michigan

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