

With the grain

'Bald Brewer' supplies everything Longmont needs to make beer, wine

By Bruce Leaf
Longmont Ledger

Step into The Bald Brewer and the first thing you notice is the aroma of hops.

An essential component in making beer, hops also play a key part in Mark Miesel's new business — providing home brewing and winemaking supplies, a service his Longmont customers tell him has been sorely lacking in the area.

"I'm the only home-brewing store in Longmont, and it's a much-needed commodity here because until now people have been going to Boulder or Fort Collins," Miesel said. "People are coming out of the woodwork."

He opened the store at 651 Eighth Ave., just west of Main Street, on March 19 in a building that formerly housed a sandwich shop.

"I'm the owner and sole employee, and I do all the operations," he said.

Starting the business meant

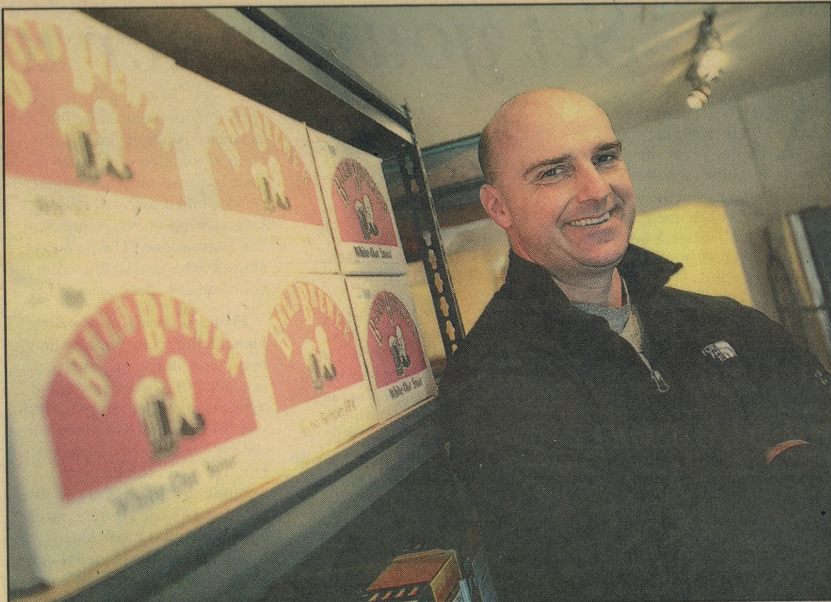
putting a 10-year career in sports psychology on hold.

"Beer and wine have always been an interest of mine. I originally wanted to do coffee or start a restaurant, but I realized the insanity of it. It's so competitive. I wanted to do something unique and creative," Miesel said. As for the name of the business? Miesel points to his crown.

Since he'd already been a home brewer for about five years, the business idea seemed like a good fit. He provides recipes, and customers can get quantities of the ingredients they need.

Getting started as a home brewer, Miesel said, costs about \$100 for the equipment and another \$30 to \$50 for the ingredients to make five gallons of beer. That's the equivalent of two-and-a-half cases. Ingredients include grains, malt extract, yeast and hops. It takes about five weeks to brew and ferment beer before it can be drunk.

He also sells kits to make six



Mark Miesel owns The Bald Brewer, the only home-brewing supply store in Longmont. The store sells everything needed to brew beer at home including homemade kits and a wide variety of yeast, grain and hops. Kira Horvath, Longmont Ledger

gallons of wine, which is the equivalent of about three cases. The kits run \$75 to \$85.

Jenn Rohl bought one of those kits.

"I just started winemaking. I'm brand new at it, and I'm excited someone is making the product in the area," she said.

Rohl said Miesel is friendly, helpful and knowledgeable.

Miesel said one thing that caught him by surprise is that specialty bread makers have been coming in to buy grains because they can get what they need in bulk.

"I'm still learning what my customers want. It's about meeting their needs," he said.

Besides being a home brewer, Miesel holds a doctorate in sports psychology, which he earned in Cape Town, South Africa.

"I researched fear in extreme sports with athletes such as kayakers, climbers and ski racers," he said.

He worked with the 2004 Olympic boxing team that went to Athens and taught sports psychology at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and online at the University of the Rockies, also located in Colorado Springs. He said he plans to return to teaching when the business becomes self sustaining.

He wound up in South Africa after he'd been training to be part of a trampoline act with Cirque du

Soleil and was introduced to someone in the sports psychology department.

"I sold my house and was gone in two weeks," Miesel said.

He was there for three years, including one year he spent backpacking. He also spent a year living in a van in New Zealand.

"I'm an avid traveler and have been all over the world," he said. "That's part of the reason I got into beer."

"I've been trying beers everywhere I go. Every place has its own beer. It's a unique way to get to know a culture."

The Bald Brewer is open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

Email: bruceleaf@comcast.net