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## Bandon Rain storms the Oregon cider scene

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BANDON - The skies were clear for the 2016 Cranberry Festival, but a squall was brewing. The Gant family's Bandon Rain Cider Company made its debut at the festival and unveiled the company's Cranberry Apple Squall hard cider. Just one year later, thirsty cider enthusiasts are enjoying Bandon Rain at restaurants, pubs and tap rooms throughout western Oregon.

Cranberry Apple Squall is a semi-sweet hard cider infused with cranberry. An unfiltered blend of five Pacific Northwest apple varieties, the flagship cider is available year-round. Additional blends are

available seasonally. Sweet and semi-sweet blends feature raspberry, cherry, blackberry or peach. Bandon Gravenstein is a classic, single-variety apple cider with a semi-dry profile.

“Generally, the fruit forward blends are what people like and what sells well,” said Mary Gant.

Don’t Burn Gorse, a unique 2017 seasonal cider blend with hand-picked Bandon gorse blossoms, got positive attention as well. The herbal and citrus gorse flavor was a hit in the Eugene and Portland metro markets.

What does it take to flip a hobby into a growing business? How about third-generation farming expertise, some practical training, and a sprinkling of creativity.

Gary and Karen Gant, along with son Trevor and daughter-in-law Mary, established Bandon Rain in 2016. The enterprise started some three years earlier when Gary made his first batch of Bandon apple cider. The result was unimpressive, Gary admits. But Trevor and Mary were inspired to start experimenting with at-home cider making.

As their product improved, their excitement grew. Trevor and Mary were living in southern California, working in TV production. They agreed it was time for a change.

“We kept refining our recipe. Friends tried it and liked it,” said Trevor. “Mary and I decided we were tired of the TV industry. We jumped ship, sold everything and moved back to Bandon.”

The family renovated a circa 1960 shed on Gary and Karen’s farm to accommodate their equipment. The lower level now features a temperature-controlled fermentation room. Apples are pressed in a stainless steel bladder press. The apple cider base is fermented in batches of approximately 250 gallons, then mixed in a 300-gallon blending tank. Just for fun, the Gants installed a small tasting room upstairs, complete with a custom bar from locally milled timber and hand-made Port Orford cedar tap handles.

Gary is a third-generation cranberry grower. His grandfather, Elmer Gant, grew up in Coquille and Myrtle Point. Elmer and his wife Grace established clothing stores in Myrtle Point, then Bandon. But, their retail business came to an abrupt halt following the 1936 Bandon fire, which destroyed their home and storefront.

According to Gant family history, Elmer decided not to rebuild the clothing store. Instead, he invested \$320 in 160 acres of undeveloped land on Rosa Road. He started clearing the property in 1938 and began cultivating cranberries in 1940.

Tom and Marian Gant took over farm management in the 1970s, which is now co-owned by Tom and Marian and their two sons, Gary and Steve. Steve and Gary are partners in managing the family cranberry production. Tom and Marian are still active in farm operations. Today, the Gants grow roughly 51 acres of cranberries on the Rosa Road farm. The family sells about 10 percent of the crop independently and the rest to Ocean Spray. Gary is a past West Coast advisory chairman for Ocean Spray and has worked to promote Ocean Spray products.

So, it's no surprise that Bandon Rain's signature product features cranberry. When Gary and Mary attended a Cider and Perry Academy workshop, they brought a sample of Cranberry Apple Squall. Course instructor and English cider expert Peter Mitchell tasted the cider. Gary recalls how Mitchell remarked on the profile, exclaimed over the color, ("It's pink!"), and encouraged the family to launch their business.

The Gants have taken tasting notes from other professionals as well, but the public response is what keeps the family working hard to keep production up to growing demand.

"A professional can love it, but I'd rather have somebody who just likes drinking cider love it," said Mary.

When they're not pressing apples and blending ciders, the Gants are attending festivals and distributing kegs to a growing number of sellers. Fortunately, they've found a welcoming community of Oregon brewers and winemakers – people who are passionate about their craft, eager to try new products and share what they know.

"We haven't met anyone who isn't overly nice," said Trevor.

Stop by the Bandon Rain booth at the Cranberry Festival Beer Garden, near the festival stage, on Second St. in Old Town Bandon. Bandon Rain cider is available by the glass at restaurants and pubs; and by bomber, growler or keg at beer and wine shops. Visit [bandonrain.com](http://bandonrain.com) for locations.