



A selection of Trapezium's beers, many brewed with real Virginia fruit. Below: The AMC, Camp Trapezium's margherita-style pizza.



"This place is a culmination of all the things we love: beer, food, sustainability, education, and creativity."

—Jo Anne Wilson, Camp Trapezium

Alchemy in Amherst

Beer and pizza reach new heights at this destination brewery.

By PEGGY SIJSWERDA

WHEN I HEARD ABOUT A NEW destination craft brewery called Camp Trapezium—with a cool Airbnb and fabulous pizza—it quickly made my short list. My friend Elena and I synced our calendars and took off for Trapezium Brewing Company's new outdoorsy outpost just north of Lynchburg. We both needed a mountain fix, and Amherst, an über-cute town with a chill vibe, makes a perfect getaway.

Buzz has been brewing about Camp Trapezium's barrel-aged beers—only available onsite—and I was curious to learn more about the brewmaster's use of spontaneous fermentation.

Brewmaster James Frazer meets us at the door of Camp Trapezium with a big smile, colorful tats, and blue highlights in his long hair. Frazer started brewing beer 11 years ago in his kitchen after learning how online. "It's like making mac 'n' cheese. It's not that hard," he says. "It's about the process, temperature, time, and pressure."

He shows Elena and me around the tasting room and brewery, housed in the former Amherst Milling Company. The mill was still in operation when Trapezium Brewing's owner, Dave McCormack, bought it in 2018 with the idea of creating

a destination brewery. Today the property's two-story brick farmhouse has been reimagined as an elegant eight-room Airbnb, and the surrounding 76 acres provide ample room for growing ingredients for both the brewery and the onsite restaurant. The company's flagship downtown Petersburg taproom and pizza kitchen opened in 2016; a Richmond location is scheduled to open in Church Hill this year.

Frazer began brewing his first Camp Trapezium beer in 2018, well in advance of the property's opening in 2021. That's because the process can take from 18 months to three years—considerably longer than the turn-around time for making typical beer.

Spontaneous fermentation, Frazer tells me, "is a magical and beautiful thing." He takes us over to what looks like a giant stainless-steel sink in the corner of the brewery, which he refers to as a *koelschip*. This open fermentation tank—from the Dutch word for *coolship*—is positioned below two large windows framing a pastoral scene, complete with a babbling brook.

After the unfermented wort, or grain mixture, goes into the *koelschip*, Frazer opens the windows and wild yeast drifts in and lands on the

wort, which jump-starts the fermentation process. Hence *coolship*—a vessel that cools the wort. Sometimes Frazer uses wild yeast harvested from the farm. "It's a very old, traditional style of making beer," he says.

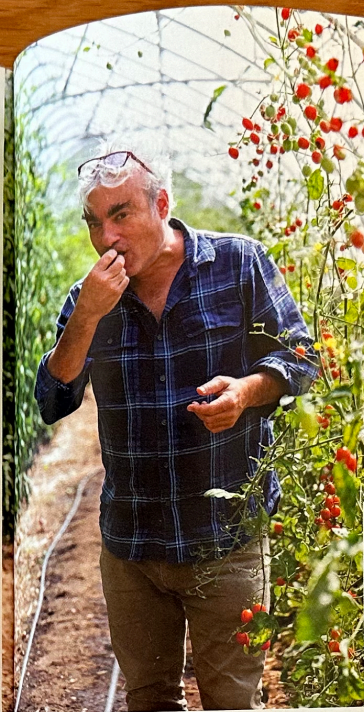
We grab a table in the rustic tasting room and sip three of Frazer's brews. "Peaches"—from the brewery's signature Orchard Series—is brewed with fruit from nearby Bedford. Barrel-aged and naturally carbonated, the beer is well-balanced and dry with amazing peach flavor, not to mention peach fuzz and pie crust notes.

We also sample "Henry" from the Birds of a Feather Series, blended from two separate barrel fermentations. Named after a rooster who lived on the farm, Henry offers notes of white wine, grapefruit zest, and fresh pineapple. "It's earthy and dry with a hint of funk," says Frazer.

Lastly, we try one from the Farmhouse Series: "Spring," which is my favorite. Traditionally brewed, this beer is created from farm-grown ingredients. "I wanted to capture tulips blooming, the smell of rain, and encompass what spring really means," Frazer explains. I love the beer's slight tartness with melon, strawberry, and banana notes.

Jo Anne Wilson, Trapezium Brewing's hospitality director, joins us at an outdoor picnic table as we sample crazy-good pizza. "It's got a cult following," says Wilson, and I can see why. We taste a margherita-style called the AMC with delicious sauce made from the farm's 2021 bounty of tomatoes, plus fresh basil and garlic. The next one is a seasonal specialty: white pizza with prosciutto, garlic, and thin lemon slices (who knew?). Fresh mozzarella tops both pizzas, and the crust is

PHOTOS BY KATE MUESE. COURTESY OF CAMP TRAPEZIUM



Fresh produce from Camp Trapezium's farm. Left: Trapezium Brewing owner Dave McCormack tastes a tomato fresh off the vine.

tender and tasty. We also try delicious farm salads and a trio of dips served with fresh-from-the-oven breadsticks.

Frazer keeps our glasses full of his fabulous beer as our conversation turns to the "why" of Camp Trapezium. "This place is a culmination of all the things we love: beer, food, sustainability, education, and creativity," says Wilson. Frazer agrees, "It's what we believe in."

There is a feel-good vibe here, and I get the sense that this business is all about making

people—and animals and plants—happy. "We talk a lot about the magic that is Camp," owner Emily Sanfella says. "It's this beautiful place that's a respite from the everyday grind. Our job is to protect and preserve that magic so that our guests can experience it whenever they visit." TrapeziumBrewing.com/Amherst

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CAMP GETAWAY

MAKE IT A WEEKEND. and stay in Camp Trapezium's farmhouse Airbnb, nestled in charming Amherst. With eight bedrooms, each with its own fridge, this completely renovated American Foursquare is a two-minute walk to the brewery and taproom down the hill or a 20-minute drive to neighboring Lynchburg. And, a number of wineries, vineyards, and tasting rooms are nearby. Rent the whole house for big groups, or just a bedroom or two for smaller gatherings. Airbnb.com