Here's how a former pharmacy technician became a brewery owner in Aberdeen

Ryan Clay, Audrey Miller buy One-Legged Pheasant hoping to preserve neighborhood gathering spot, add their own twists

By Jason Lopez Martinez - June 22, 2026 in Featured, Business, News Reading Time: 3 minutes



Audrey Miller and Ryan Clay are the new owners of One-Legged Pheasant brewery at home 721 S. Main St. Aberdeen Insider photo by Jason Lopez Martinez.

Buying a brewery wasn't part of Ryan Clay's plan.

He has a degree in biotechnology from Northern State University. He worked at the hospital pharmacy at Sanford Health. Before that, he spent years in kitchens and bars, learning the rhythms of the service industry.

Then, he heard that Aberdeen's One-Legged Pheasant Brewery was for sale.

"It was sort of just a fun idea that just kept going, and here we are now," Clay said.



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He and his wife Audrey Miller took ownership of One-Legged Pheasant on May 1, buying Aberdeen's only brewery about seven years after founder Dave Welling opened it at 721 S. Main St.

The idea to do so was Mlller's.

Miller, who is friends with members of the Aberdeen Brewers and Vintners Club, first heard the brewery was for sale while traveling with one of them on a business trip. She works in the Music Department at Northern State University.

"I told Ryan. Then, it took him like a month to decide that that might be a good idea," Miller said.

Welling launched the brewery in 2018 and had a grand opening during Northern State homecoming weekend that fall. After moving to Texas a few years back, managing the business from hundreds of miles away became increasingly difficult, prompting him to look for a buyer.

Looking for a change

For Clay, the opportunity arrived at a moment when he was looking for a change.

"I had been sort of looking to strike out on my own for quite a while," he said.

Friends in the local home-brewing community suggested One-Legged Pheasant might be a fit. Clay's background seemed to line up in unexpected ways with his years in restaurants, experience in a hospital cleanroom and an education rooted in biology.

A cleanroom at a health care facility is a sterile, isolated area that is highly controlled to reduce the presence of airborne contaminants.

"These ferment tanks are large-scale bioreactors," Clay said of the large containers used to brew beer in the back of the building. "We're doing kind of the same thing, except instead of doing it in milliliter quantities in sterile glassware, we're doing it in gallon quantities in a sanitary steel tank."

Still, he said, it's been a significant transition.



Ryan Clay, one of the new owners of One-Legged Pheasant brewery pours a beer from a tap. He and his wife Audrey Miller bought the business from founder Dave Welling. Aberdeen Insider photo by Jason Lopez Martinez.

Clay worked in Sanford's kitchen before spending years at The Brass Kettle and, later, Circus Sports Bar & Grill. In doing those jobs, he gained experience not only preparing food, but also observing how local business owners operated.

"It's sort of both eye-opening and inspiring to see people put everything into a business like that," he said. "Stuff doesn't happen by accident."



That perspective shaped his expectations about brewery ownership.

"I think if we're talking about breweries specifically, I don't know if people realize just how much the job is cleaning. It's always the joke, but, yeah, like it's 90% cleaning," Clay said with a laugh.

Many job titles

Owning a brewery also means taking on other job titles.

"You're a brewer, you're a bartender, you're an accountant, you're a manager, you're a plumber, you're a janitor," Clay said. "You're everything."

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He and Miller have been fine-tuning some things at One-Legged Pheasant. Clay has brewed a couple of his own creations and adjusted some existing recipes. He and Miller have also brought back pub trivia on Wednesday nights, which has drawn some nice crowds.

On the first and third Wednesdays of the month at 6 p.m. through August, there's a group that leaves the brewery for a fun bike ride and/or run. That finishes before 7 p.m. when trivia begins.

But, some things haven't changed. The brewery still partners with Nick's Pizza to provide pies for hungry patrons. And on Tuesday nights, tacos from Dulces Hispanic Store and Mexican Restaurant are sold. The brewery's mug club is still going, too.

One-Legged Pheasant is open from 4 to 10 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and from 4 to 11 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. It's closed Sundays and Mondays.