



To our loyal Spring Lake customers:

It is with mixed emotions that we are announcing the sale of our original facility in Spring Lake. This Fall will be our 15th and final season at this location. Amanda and I started Vander Mill in 2006 after more than a year of preparation and while expecting our first child. The goal was to create a family-friendly retail environment that focused on the bounty of Michigan apples. We sought to provide the quintessential fall experience by serving our customers all that makes it special. We produced apple cider, fudge, candied nuts, caramel apples, and donuts...ohh the donuts. It was not uncommon to see me driving our old tractor with the barrel train diligently following behind, full of happy children as their parents took a needed reprieve from their rearing duties. Sometimes the train was even empty while I rode alone in hopes of catching the attention of a potential customer driving by.

Over the years, we reimagined our retail business and product offerings so many different times in an effort to keep the business alive. Some of you may remember buying local Michigan cheeses, crackers, jams and jellies, ice cream, christmas trees, holiday ornaments, muffins, and cakes....The list is long and quite frankly seems like a lifetime ago. We reinvested to bring many of these offerings to the farmers markets in Grand Haven, Holland and Muskegon, and made a lot of friends along the way.

In 2009 we began producing hard cider. Originally, this too was just an attempt to broaden our retail appeal, but something different was happening that would take our business to places we never imagined or intended. We drove demand for our hard cider through local bars and retailers in addition to our own facility. We started selling in towns and cities across West Michigan. Finally something was working! The interest in this part of our business demanded more and more time and investment. We soon began selling our ciders in Chicago and Detroit, full of pride that we were making cider from Michigan apples in the small town Spring Lake.

In 2012 we expanded our facility in Spring Lake, excited for the opportunity, but fearful of increasing our debt to over \$1 million, now with two little girls, Katelyn and Emily, and a third little girl, Lauren, on the way. The risk and excitement were nearly too much to handle. This expansion would most certainly last us a lifetime. We had no concept that the interest in our ciders would challenge our new capacity within a matter of months. We became the regional leader in manufacturing hard cider with national recognition in the category. In order to continue to grow we needed a dramatic investment in more production capability. In 2016, we opened our new production facility and taproom in Grand Rapids. After spending over \$4 million in renovations and equipment, we now have a facility that can house continued growth for the foreseeable future.

We have always done our best to provide unique experiences as we educate people about the broad flavor profiles of our different ciders. It hasn't been easy. We have been challenged every step of the way. The facility in Spring Lake was where it all started. We have laughed, cried, bled and worked ourselves to the brink in this building. Our initials are in the concrete. We raised three kids here while trying to serve you with a welcoming smile. We have employed hundreds of people over the years. For some, it was a first job and for others, a new opportunity.

The feelings we have surrounding this decision are vast and complicated. When you own a small business there is rarely ever time to look back and appreciate what has been accomplished. The future is always full of both opportunity and challenges. Moving forward in these uncertain times, we have to work harder than ever to utilize resources where they can provide the most value for the future. Right now, we need to continue to innovate and support the sale and production of our brands. We have some very exciting things coming that we hope you will appreciate.

We will miss our big red barn in Spring Lake, but sincerely appreciate the opportunity it provided for our family and yours to enjoy Michigan! We hope you will stop by this Fall and share in celebrating the wonderful times we have had together.

Sincerely,

Paul and Amanda Vander Heide