

**T**wo decades ago, a creatively zealous man used his passion for brewing to transform the small town of Bellaire into a popular craft beer destination.

Like many brewing professionals, Joe Short got his start homebrewing. As a student at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, where he was studying industrial arts education on his way to becoming a woodshop teacher, he was introduced to the art of making beer. When he decided to leave college after his junior year, the Kalkaska native soon turned his hobby into a career. He worked at several area breweries before returning to northern Michigan to convert a century-old, two-story brick hardware store in downtown Bellaire into Short's Brewing.

In the spring of 2004, the then 24-year-old sold his first beer — a pint of Huma Lupa Licious IPA (India Pale Ale), which remains one of the brewery's top sellers. From the beginning, Short pushed the boundaries, often utilizing obscure ingredients such as licorice, blue spruce tips, peanut butter, and tomatoes, along with locally grown hops and malted barley, for what became his flagship, seasonal, and experimental beers.

Over the years, Short's expanded its Bellaire footprint to include five storefronts:



**Above:** The robust Hazy is meant for the hazy times between the Mitten's four seasons. **Top:** Short's Beer Garden in Bellaire features a music venue.

#### TASTING ROOM

## Short's Up North Stops

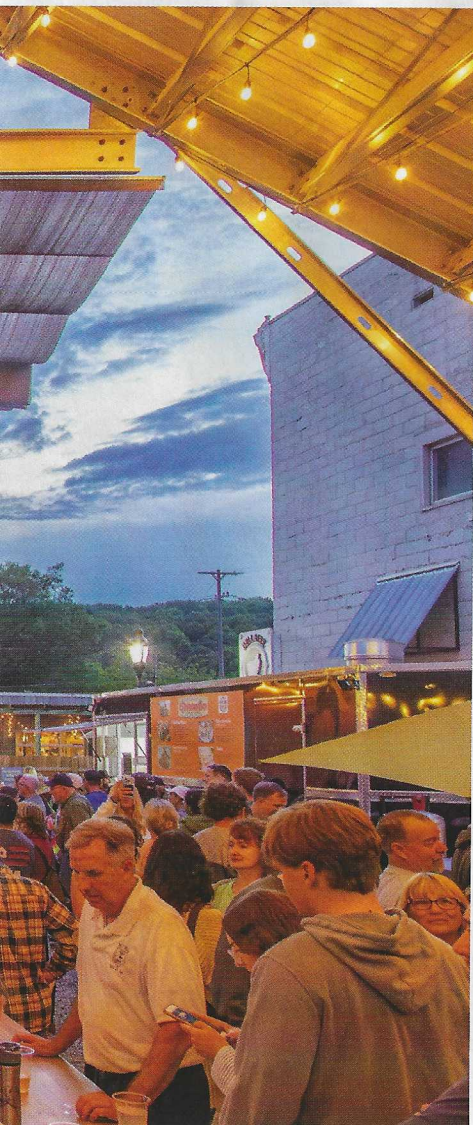
A Michigan brewing legend grows his distinctive beer lineup and expands his footprint to include five fun hotspots

BY  
Dianna Stampfer

a retail store, music venue, beer garden, and a second-level two-bedroom vacation rental. In the peak of summer, the pub can easily turn out 800 pizzas a day, along with salads, sandwiches, and appetizers to meet the demand. Short's also acquired the 26-unit Bellaire Inn in 2022, helping to lessen the burdens of seasonal housing and workforce needs.

"Short's is the backbone of the early success of Bellaire, without a doubt. It really made the village a destination and put it on the map," says Jamie Creason, who has owned the Applesauce Inn Bed & Breakfast on M-88, on the outskirts of Bellaire, since 2010. "To this day, I have many guests who make Short's their very first stop when they hit town. Rarely do I even have to suggest it; for the most part,





on U.S. 31 in Elk Rapids in 2008 to handle an influx in packaged distribution, turning it into Michigan's largest independent craft brewery. An indoor, year-round taproom called The Pull Barn was the next to open, accommodating the growing number of beer tourists looking for unique tasting experiences. The adjoining outdoor beer garden has become one of the area's hottest summer spots to gather with friends and family, including well-behaved, leashed dogs.

In the fall of 2019, Short's teamed up with the Michigan Economic Development Corp. to release the first in its series of seasonal Pure Michigan branded beers. Each is crafted using state-sourced ingredients from businesses such as Hop Alliance in Omena, Valley View Farms in East Jordan, and Great Lakes Malting Co. in Traverse City.

"The Pure Michigan series from Short's has really put a spotlight on the agricultural contributions to Michigan beer," says Brian Tennis, who founded Hop Alliance on the Leelanau Peninsula with his wife, Amy. "Joe Short was the first Michigan brewer to buy our hops more than 17 years ago, and we're honored to be a source for locally grown hops in many of his beers, such as the Pure Michigan Summer IPA."

In addition to its extensive beer portfolio, with favorites such as Soft Parade, Local's Light, and Bellaire Brown, Short's produces Starcut Ciders, which are made with Michigan apples, and Beaches Hard Seltzer cocktail-inspired flavors such as mojito, margarita, piña colada, and paloma.

The two Short's locations are easy to visit in one day because they're just about 25-30 miles apart, depending on the route (either way, one must travel north or south around picturesque Torch Lake). Both are also accessible by water, and are connected by the Chain of Lakes Water Trail, an extensive paddling route that traverses more than 100 miles through Antrim County's rivers and lakes.

Those interested in a behind-the-scenes look at the Short's operation can join a public tour offered between noon-4 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays at the Bellaire pub. If you're lucky, you might meet up with Short himself, who's easily recognizable by his signature handlebar mustache and cheeky grin. ≈

### Plan It!

**Short's Brewing**  
shortsbrewing.com

it's why they're here."

Short's dedication to his craft has led him to develop one of the most celebrated beer brands in the Great Lakes region. But Creason recognizes that it's more than just the distinctive beer that makes Short's a successful leader in the regional business community.

"It's the whole package," she says. "They support all things 'Up North,' from local musicians such as Billy Strings, The Accidentals, Crane Wives, May Erlewine, Joshua Davis, and so many more, to the good food, communal seating, the beer garden, and events such as the original Short's to Short's paddle (now Paddle Antrim) and their legendary anniversary parties."

As business continued to grow, Short's purchased an old manufacturing building

**Right:** It's always a good time at Short's. What was once the Bellaire Hardware store has been lovingly transformed and expanded since 2004 into a vibrant and quirky space for community gatherings.

