

<http://www.crainscleveland.com/article/20151022/BLOGS16/151029919/father-son-team-opens-first-cleveland-malt-house-since-prohibition>



Photo by LEE CHILCOTE Andrew Martahus, right, and his father, Craig, are preparing to open Haus Malts, a micro malt house in Cleveland's MidTown neighborhood. Here, they stand next to a seed cleaner that use in the malting process.

Andrew Martahus graduated last year from Washington University in St. Louis, with a degree in chemical engineering. He moved back home to Shaker Heights and began searching for a job, but he didn't land anything right away.

“I talked to Sherwin-Williams, Lubrizol and Goodyear,” said Martahus, who is 23. “I was in the final rounds for several jobs, but nothing stuck. While I was interviewing, I started brewing beer in my free time. You can only send out so many emails a day, right?”

His weekend hobby soon spawned a cool business idea. While procuring homebrew ingredients (beer consists of just four main ingredients: water, malt, hops and yeast), Martahus stumbled on a micro malt house called Riverbend in Asheville, N.C. He began searching for a similar business in Ohio and realized there were no malt houses here — most of our malt seems to come from big producers in the upper Midwest, despite the state being fourth in the nation for craft beer brewing.

At about the same time, Andrew's father, Craig Martahus, was getting ready to retire from a career as a lawyer with Thompson Hine. "I told my dad about the place in North Carolina and said, 'Maybe we could visit it sometime,'" said Andrew Martahus. "He said, 'Let's go.' So we drove down there one weekend. Then we formed a business plan and started looking at the market in Ohio."

In April, the father-son team purchased the building at 6601 Carnegie Ave. and set about converting it into [Haus Malts](#), Cleveland's first micro malt house since Prohibition. The property's last "legitimate" business use was as the headquarters for mechanical contractor Smith and Oby. The Martahus family purchased the building from someone serving time in the Mansfield prison for possession of 250 pounds of marijuana.

The 10,000-square-foot facility will start producing its first test batches in the next month or so. Andrew Martahus claims there's plenty of interest from a largely untapped market. While many craft brewers tout the fact that their beer is brewed locally, right now, one of the main ingredients used to make beer is shipped from out of state. Haus Malts aims to change that.

"There are 1.1 million barrels of beer being produced from 76 breweries in Ohio," he said. "It takes us about 50 pounds of malt per barrel of beer. So that means there's 50 million pounds of malt being used by craft breweries in Ohio. None of it's from here."

Craig Martahus, who is plowing his own funds into the facility, is also fired up about the idea. "I had a great run practicing law, but to be able to start over and teach yourself something new, to be able to learn and do this with my own son, that's a great treat," he said. "I'm really excited."

### **Making malt from grain**

Malt refers to any germinated grain, usually barley, used in brewing and distilling. Andrew Martahus' choice of career may seem like a sharp left turn from his undergraduate education in chemical engineering, yet the opposite is true. In this modern food processing facility in the heart of MidTown, he will soon oversee the step-by-step process of making malt from grain.

Different types of beer use different varieties and combinations of grains, Martahus explained. For example, IPAs use almost 100% barley, while wheat beers consist of about 50% barley and 50% wheat. Porters usually use a light barley as the base, but small amounts of darker malt are added to create their darker character. Haus Malts does not yet have a drum roaster for roasting malts used in darker beers, but that's part of the second phase plans.

"We can handle most beers," explained Martahus, adding that although Haus Malts' pricing will be higher than corporate purveyors like Cargill, the product will be high-quality and can be custom-blended to a brewer's specifications.

Haus Malts uses a type of two-row barley called Newdale that is grown by Maine Potato Growers, Inc., in Presque Isle, Maine. It is sent by truck to Hirzel Farms in Luckey, Ohio, where the seeds are cleaned so that uniform barley kernels can be shipped to Haus Malts. The company,

whose warehouse is now stocked with raw material, will soon turn its wheat, spelt, rye and barley into specific combinations of malt, called “grain bills,” that will be sold to craft brewers.

Martahus compares the malting process to coffee roasting, although it’s obviously significantly more complex than that. Throughout the carefully monitored seven-day process, the grain is steeped in a temperature-controlled germination room, baked in a low-temperature kiln and then filtered through a rootlet remover called a deculmer before it’s placed in 50 pound bags.

“We start the full-fledged germination process,” said the chemistry major. “During the first four days, it’s growing. The kernel has a matrix of protein and starch, and it starts producing enzymes that start to sugar. We stop before it fully sprouts through the end of the kernel. We’ve used some but not all of the starch. Then the brewer converts the starch and sugar using natural enzymes in the kernel. That makes sugar, and yeast eats the sugar to make alcohol.”

Haus Malts plans to focus initially on the Cleveland area, testing its malt combinations on breweries like Great Lakes, Platform and Market Garden, which have expressed interest in the product. Martahus said that he’s already received inquiries from breweries in Columbus, Toledo and Cincinnati, among other places. The company will focus on the Great Lakes region.

To gear up for opening the facility, both father and son attended a two-week intensive program at the Canadian Malting Barley Technical Centre in Winnipeg, Canada. Traveling clear across North America was pretty much the only way to learn the craft from experts at the so-called “malt academy” of Canada.

“It was the only place to learn how to malt that was not through the big corporations that control the market,” said Andrew Martahus. “It’s sort of a black box. There’s not much information out there.”

He recently had a chance to brew a spelt grain beer with Andy Tveekrem, the head brewer behind Market Garden and Nano Brew. “We took the Pearl Street Wheat and replaced the wheat with spelt,” said Martahus. “We called it the Rust Belt Spelt. It sold out in one week.”

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