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Wannabe ski bum brings upscale convenience to Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

By Pat Pape

When Chicago-native Gavin Fine moved to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, 22 years ago, his plan was to enjoy the life of a ski bum for a couple of years before getting serious and launching a career.

But making a living in what was quickly growing into a luxury vacation destination wasn't easy, especially for a self-proclaimed ski bum. "I worked three jobs like everybody else—barista, cook, babysitter," Fine said. "So, the ski bum thing didn't happen."

Thanks to his past experience in the restaurant business and a degree from Cornell University's Hotel and Restaurant Management School, Fine found a job in foodservice to pay his bills. Eventually, his entrepreneurial spirit kicked in. In 2001, he opened Rendezvous Bistro, his first Jackson Hole eatery. Two years later, he added a catering business, and by 2015, the Fine Dining Restaurant Group had a total of five restaurants and a premium butchery called Bovine & Swine. In addition, Fine runs two other operations: one producing craft beer and another making artisan ice cream, both of which are going into multi-state distribution.

And then he acquired the old filling station in Teton Village at the bottom of the ski slope.

A BODEGA IS BORN

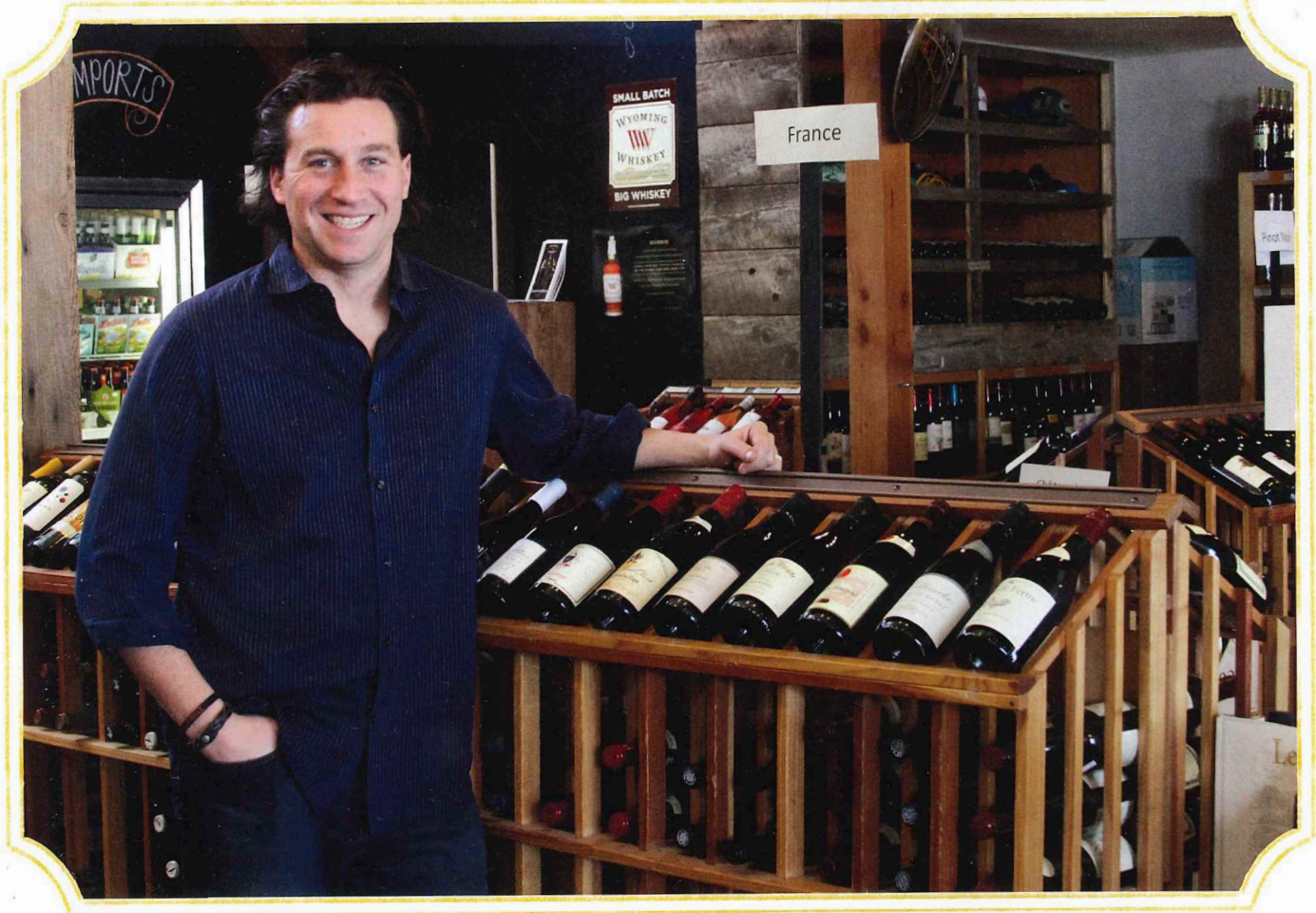
"At the base of the hill, there was this old garage where they fixed cars back in the '60s," said Fine. "Someone had turned it into a kind of convenience store, and I saw the opportunity to bring a little bodega to Jackson Hole. A little corner store like you see in New York City or Chicago where people could get their provisions and wouldn't have to go to the big grocery stores."

Fine's personal travel in Europe was the inspiration for Bodega, the convenience store he opened in 2015. "When you drive on the Autobahn and pull into a place to fill up, it's not like a gas station," he said. "Those stores have cases of fresh mozzarella, paninis, sandwiches and wine. If you want to translate that to the U.S., think of the backroads of New England where they have country stores. You can fill up [your car], but it's all about eating and drinking."

The rustic 3,300-square-foot garage needed a facelift. Fine brought in reclaimed wooden beams to decorate the interior, constructed a casual bar and added 10 red, swivel bar stools. Today, the walls are chalkboard so employees can promote the latest offerings with their own original artwork.

"We drew murals of fish drinking beer on the walls," he said. "Adjacent to the store, we opened up a food truck so we could make and serve gourmet fried chicken sandwiches and tacos." (Bodega's food truck is a trailer permanently parked next to the store.)





Gavin Fine turned an old filling station into a c-store that offers upscale food, fine wines and craft beers to Jackson Hole's thriving community and tourists.

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Because it's located at the base of the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, Bodega is a convenient place for skiers, bikers and hikers to drop in for a glass of wine or a mug of beer, including craft brews from Fine's nearby Roadhouse Pub. Another local favorite is the sloshie, a frozen slush-style beverage for adults with fruity flavors and alcohol added.

Although Bodega carries traditional convenience store items like tobacco and sodas, Fine describes his store as a “specialty grocery and bottle shop,” with wines from around the world. “And we're the only gas station for about 10 miles,” he added.

GRAB-AND-GO

Bodega's food offerings are “upscale grab-and-go,” according to Fine. Because the Fine Dining Group has its own commissary a few miles away, Bodega can offer par-cooked, frozen pizzas that customers purchase to heat at home. In addition to gourmet groceries and imported cheeses, the store features salads, hot croissants, house-made burritos, authentic tortas, daily soups, assorted epicurean

sandwiches and an in-house butcher shop stocked with craft meats and sausages from 7 am until 9 pm seven days a week.

“We sell all-natural meat from Wyoming ranches,” Fine said. “Our pork comes from Wyoming, Utah and Idaho. Bodega is a place to get your bottle of wine and your steak, sausage or pork chop—plus house-made stocks and butters—to take home with you. We don't cook any meats except in the food truck.”

The little-garage-turned-convenience-store is unique, even for a trendy ski town. “It's a small space, but you can get anything,” Fine said. “You can pick up your dinner or walk around drinking a sloshie while you wait on your food-truck order. You can get your breakfast or buy a fresh organic burrito and artisan ice cream in pints or packages of our mini ice-cream sandwiches. And we have unbelievable, fresh baked goods.”

APRÈS SKI

Bodega is also a place where people can mix and mingle. In the winter, skiers spend their days traversing the slopes