

# Season the day: Shack 181, new beer garden and restaurant, opens in Hadley

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Joe and Shelly Boisvert, owners of The Shack 181, a new restaurant at their North Hadley Sugar Shack, Thursday, Sept. 10, 2020. STAFF PHOTO/JERREY ROBERT



Donna and David Kushi of Hadley have pizza with their son, Matt, Thursday, Sept. 10, 2020 in the outdoor dining area of The Shack 181, a new restaurant at North Hadley Sugar Shack. STAFF PHOTO/JERREY ROBERT



Joe and Shelly Boisvert, owners of The Shack 181, showing off their local beer and wine. Thursday, Sept. 10, 2020. STAFF PHOTO/JERREY ROBERT

HADLEY — For more than 25 years, North Hadley Sugar Shack at 181 River Drive has been serving up hot pancakes for breakfast seasonally, along with its fresh local maple syrup. But now, the sugar shack has expanded its offerings with an indoor/outdoor beer garden-style restaurant called The Shack 181.

Joe Boisvert, co-owner with his wife, Shelly Boisvert, said that although the idea for The Shack 181 was in the works more than a year before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, he hopes the new restaurant will help the small, family-owned sugar shack and eatery continue to operate.

“Some people might think, ‘Why the hell would we ever open up a restaurant during these times, when most people are going out of business?’” he said. “We started this process way before COVID, and we already have a commercial licensed kitchen with most of the equipment there. That reassures us to keep going forward during these uncharted times where we don’t know what tomorrow will bring.”

Kevin Burt, sales and marketing specialist with the North Hadley Sugar Shack and The Shack 181, said this year’s sugaring season, from February to April, was drastically impacted with about 80% of seasonal food and beverage sales lost due to the pandemic. The hope is that with year round operations through The Shack 181, the business can make up for that lost revenue.

“Our kitchen is more or less shut down and static for most of the eight or nine months out of the year,” he said. “We have options to do some catering, we’ve done some special events, but that’s not really the best use of our commercial kitchen, which is sitting idle for most of the year.”

Joe Boisvert said The Shack 181 is focused on craft beer offerings and homecooked meals, ranging from steak dinners to farm fresh pizzas topped with seasonal produce and harvest salads. Cider and bourbon-maple

*(Shack 181 cont'd)*

chicken is a featured option “from the grills,” with housemade dipping sauces such as maple mayo and sweet maple BBQ.

“The idea is to start with the term ‘farm fresh,’ which really means everything possible that we can get from our own farm and from our meat supply — we raise all of our own beef, chicken and pork. If we can’t grow, produce or supply it, then we’d get it from local farms in and around Hadley or the Pioneer Valley,” Burt said.

Many of the dishes on the menu incorporate elements of the sugar shack or maple products; French fries and onion rings are served in miniature maple tapping buckets, Burt said.

The restaurant has indoor dining in compliance with COVID-19 state guidelines (nine tables that are all 6 feet apart) and outdoor patio dining with six tables. The indoor portion of the restaurant seats 28

people, while the outdoor limit is 25 people, Burt said. The Shack 181 also includes the option for patrons to take their meals to go.

“In cautious optimism, we all agreed that we had to keep moving forward at the end of the summer,” Burt said. “As long as the state mandates allowed us to open this restaurant, we just stayed on track to open. We originally wanted to open in May, but here we are several months later. The planning and time really allowed us to take all the steps necessary to make sure that this was done right.”

For more information about the North Hadley Sugar Shack and The Shack 181, visit [northhadleysugarshack.com/the-shack-181.html](http://northhadleysugarshack.com/the-shack-181.html).

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