

Pliable pint glasses

Bend's Silipint puts a new twist on drinking • BUSINESS, B1



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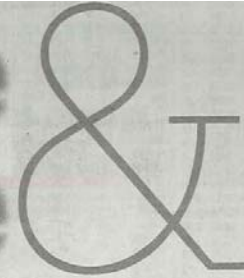
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From top, Robert Berman, Kira Christante and Rick Fredland with some Silipints on Thursday in Bend. Silipints are pint-size cups made of silicone.

Silicone salable



Silipint of Bend has high hopes for its pliable pint glasses

By Jordan Novet
The Bulletin

One Bend inventor has come up with a new use for silicone. "The response that people get once they kind of get their hands on it is really fun," said the inventor, Rick Fredland, who in the past has developed silicone dog bowls, among other products. Here's a hint from the new company's president, Robert Berman: "You

have to experience drinking out of" the product.

The company is called Silipint Inc., and the product is a silicone cup in the shape of a standard pint glass. It's dishwasher- and microwave-safe, free of the chemical bisphenol A and, well, fun.

"When Rick and I first met, I got it right away," Berman said. "It's kind of like the paper clip."

Turns out nothing quite like it exists

in the American market — yet.

Fredland, the so-called principal pint peddler, brought in Berman and Kira Christante, who has product management experience, to help him market and sell Silipints.

The company's three employees share a vision of hawking the bendable but sturdy Silipints nationally and internationally.

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Silipints

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As soon as possible, the company wants to hire 17 people in Central Oregon to do sales work from home or in the company's office in the Old Mill District. Berman hopes to fill those spots within the next 30 or 45 days.

The business plan calls for \$8 million in sales in 2011, with a vast percentage of business coming from the use of the Silipint as a promotional product, Berman said.

Despite the company's determination to sell Silipints as promotional products worldwide, the cups are already in circulation in Bend.

Visit Bend offers a Silipint or a copy of "Bend Brews: A Beer Lover's Guide to Bend Area Breweries," by André Bartels and Bob Woodward,

to any person who completes the Bend Ale Trail, by visiting the seven breweries in Bend.

The idea for the Silipint, Fredland said, came during a phone conversation with a friend. Fredland was already running tazlab, the company producing the silicone dog bowls and other pet accessories, and, in an aha moment, Fredland said to the friend on the phone, instead of producing pint glasses to promote tazlab, "Wouldn't it be great if we made silicone pint glasses, to be kind of parallel to our dog bowls?"

After the phone call, one thing led to another. Fredland told people at the China factory that manufactures the dog bowls to buy a pint glass and make a similar product out of silicone. Fredland worked with a product designer to improve on the original model, with changes to the surface, the lip of the cup and other

traits. And eventually, in 2010, Fredland decided to try to make a business revolving around the product.

He discussed the idea of the company with Doug La Placa, Visit Bend's president and CEO.

The idea of establishing the Bend Ale Trail had been in the works at the time, La Placa said, but meetings about Silipint moved things forward.

"The conversations regarding Silipints had a lot to do with the formation of the Bend Ale Trail," La Placa said.

Since the Bend Ale Trail came into existence in June 2010, the Silipints have moved quickly. La Placa estimated Visit Bend has given away almost 1,000 Silipints.

Fredland said he does not wish to make the pint glass obsolete; rather, he intends to put Silipints into the hands of people interested in bet-

ter functionality. It won't shatter by the pool or at the bar, for one thing, Berman said. It insulates liquid better than glass, Fredland said. In fact, Fredland has made a game out of bouncing a Silipint on the ground again and again.

And products related to Silipints are on the way. Fredland said he is working on "some super-cool new follow-up products," which he declined to describe, citing intellectual-property concerns.

Silipints are now available for \$10 each at www.silipint.com, and purchasing in bulk reduces the price per cup. Berman said soon a few local companies, such as BendBroadband, will offer free Silipints as promotional items.

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