

# Stowe Beverage



1880 Mountain Road, Stowe • (802) 253-4525 • Store Owner: Lisa Mugford

**T**o watch Lisa Mugford walk through the front door of Stowe Beverage is to get the impression she's walking into her living room.

There's a sense of comfort and familiarity she has with customers and employees alike that comes from the years she and her family, including store manager and brother-in-law Dennis Diego, have been in the business. With more than three decades experience running Vermont state liquor agency stores, Mugford has become as much a part of this popular stop along the Mountain Road as any of the memorable destinations in this renowned resort village.

"It's really not like a typical liquor store," says Mugford. "It's a small store and it's packed full of glass bottles and cans, but we have custom-made wooden shelving with

a lot of nice displays. It's kept really clean – it's actually kind of homey."

Mugford's family owned liquor agency stores in Waterbury and Montpelier previously, and opened the Stowe store 26 years ago. During that time, she's observed the ebbs and flows of visitors to the resort town. What was once solely a ski destination has evolved into a year-round hot spot. And it's all scientifically measured by what flies off the shelves.

"We're open 80 hours a week, and we're wicked busy," Mugford says. "Summer is really, really busy. When school goes back we'll settle down for a few months until mid-October, which is when the leaf-peepers arrive. After the foliage peaks it dies down a little, but when the snow starts to fly it gets crazy again."

The shop-owner says that while New Year's Day tends to be the busiest of the year, August is surprisingly the most consistently active time of year.

"The town of Stowe has done a great job getting people in here year-round," she says. "It's changed. There was a time when summers weren't too busy, but now it can get wild."

It's not unusual to find the Stowe Beverage team – several of whom have more than 15 years of service behind the counter and in the aisles – catching up with the many customers who frequent the store. As a longtime Stowe fixture, the busy spot in front of the 1,500-square-foot store can become an impromptu gathering place for regulars who swap stories and share the news of the day.

"Sometimes my employees talk to customers way too long as the line backs up," Mugford says, laughing. "It can get pretty silly in here. We have fun when we work."

And work, they do. The store is perhaps best known for its fine wine and craft beer selection – but also for its special order and high-end spirits. A cursory look through the well-

Written by Bill Burke  
Photos by Matthew Thorsen



stocked shelves reveals a diverse selection of single-malt Scotches and cognacs, four different kinds of the sought-after Whistle Pig whiskeys and high-end tequilas.

“The Vermont-made spirits sell best here,” Mugford says. “One of our biggest sellers is Green Mountain Distillers Original Sunshine Vodka, but they all sell well.”

Stowe Beverage services more than 70 restaurants in town, and Mugford says she attributes the business to her team’s customer service skills.



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“Some of our old customers from our Waterbury store even come in,” she says. “We do special orders and put up liquor orders for restaurants very quickly. It’s all reputation and word-of-mouth.

“I really do think it’s all about customer service. We’re known for carrying out boxes for our restaurants and customers, ordering things that customers have been told isn’t available – though you can if you try. And we do try. We go above and beyond to make the customer happy.” ☺



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