

*partners*

**COLD RIVER™**  
*Distinctive maine potato*  
**VODKA**  
*the spirit of maine*

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## COLD RIVER VODKA PARTNERS: BIBLIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUNDEERS



### **BOB HARKINS, MANAGING PARTNER OF MARKETING AND SALES**

A former United States Ski Team coach and longtime Sunday River Ski Area executive, Bob's Cold River Vodka venture actually began more than three decades ago during an intense snowball fight on the campus of the University of Maine at Orono. It was there that he first met fellow student Lee Thibodeau, who would become his life-long friend.

Fast forward 30 or so years to 2003, to when Bob, a Lewiston, Maine native, received a phone call from Donnie Thibodeau, Lee's brother. The Thibodeau boys were finally ready to try their hand at making potato vodka, an idea they'd batted around since they were kids living in Aroostook County. Bob agreed to look into it, and what he found excited both him and the Thibodeaus. The rest, as they say, is history.

"There is no book on distilling vodka from potatoes, so every day is an adventure," Bob says. "The learning curve has been steep, but the upside has been that we're in control of our own destiny with this venture. If we succeed, it will be because we made good decisions."

For Bob - who brings savvy business experience, leadership and, above all else, integrity, to the venture, Maine Distilleries represents something more than just making super-premium Maine potato vodka.

"This is living the proverbial American dream where people create small businesses that are the backbone of our economy," he says. "It's about a willingness to take a risk versus living status quo each day. It's about working with a great team of people to reach a common goal. These things, to me, are pretty awesome."

Bob lives in Paris, Maine with his wife, Sally, their two sons, Sawyer and Chase, and daughter, Abby, as well as three grandchildren - Noah, Tyler and Mya. His favorite way to enjoy Cold River Vodka is in a frozen martini he sips while sitting around the fire with family and friends at his camp on Tripp Lake in Poland, Maine.



### **CHRIS DOWE, MANAGING PARTNER AND HEAD DISTILLER**

With a Master of Business degree from Maine's Husson College and more than a decade of experience in the brewing industry, Chris Dowe brings a unique perspective to Maine Distilleries and its sole product, Cold River Vodka.

During the 1990s, Chris trained under British/Canadian brewer Mike Hall while taking courses through the International Brewer's Guild based in London. He graduated from the Brewer's Short Course at Durham University in Durham, England. Chris went on to found his own consulting firm, Global Brewing Services, and from 1994 to 2004 installed or consulted for over 40 new breweries.

At Maine Distilleries in Freeport, he is the one behind the glass, monitoring the distillation process like a hawk, to be certain that every bottle of Cold River Vodka is of the highest quality and the best taste. It's a post he truly enjoys.

"My favorite thing about Maine Distilleries is the uniqueness of being the first real, new distillery in Maine," Chris notes. "The potato end of it just adds to that uniqueness. The first one on the block always has 'bragging rights.'"

Chris lives in New Gloucester with his wife, Jean St. Pierre, who comes from Aroostook County. Her family, originally from France, is now in its sixth generation growing Maine potatoes. This tie strengthens Chris' commitment to the Maine potato industry. The couple has two children – Benjamin Victor and Molly Mairead. He best enjoys his Cold River Vodka while barbequing by the pool.

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**LEE THIBODEAU, M.D., CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD**

Lee grew up in Presque Isle, Maine, located in Aroostook County. “The County,” as it’s called by Mainers, covers all of northern Maine and is famous for its rural character, and well as for its hard-working, resilient residents who possess a great loyalty to their roots.

Lee, who is one of four siblings, took advantage of his northern Maine surroundings. As a child, Lee and his brother, Donnie, would ask to be dropped on the banks of the Aroostook river with a canoe, paddles, a fry pan, some hamburger – and nothing else but time. When it was time for Lee to leave Maine for school, he promised to return.

Over the years, Lee and his brother have had long talks about different business startups. Lee has continually searched for a business opportunity that would reflect the very unique resources of Maine. Several years ago, during a long car ride to Presque Isle, the brothers

came to the conclusion that potato vodka would not only be a lucrative way to add value to the Maine Potato crop, but would also work to preserve Maine’s coveted open spaces and support the state’s vibrant farming community.

Currently, Lee is a practicing neurosurgeon at Neurosurgical Associates in southern Maine. Although immersed in his busy medical practice, he is an integral part of the Cold River Vodka venture.

Lee lives on Broad Cove in a restored historic tavern in Cumberland Foreside with his wife, Holly, their son, Jack, and daughter, Kate. As a family, they enjoy fishing and boating in Casco Bay, gardening, and skiing during the winter months.

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**DONNIE THIBODEAU, VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD**

Donnie and his wife, Brenda, are the proud owners of Green Thumb Farms – the farm in Fryeburg, Maine, where Maine Distilleries’ potatoes are grown for Cold River Vodka.

Donnie is an innovative businessman with an entrepreneurial spirit. Green Thumb Farms is a multi-million dollar operation which provides the highest-quality, best-tasting potatoes in Maine to major chain stores and distributors. Some of the farm’s larger accounts include Shaw’s Supermarkets, Northcenter Foods, SYSCO Food Services, Whole Foods Markets and Frito Lay.

The 1600-acre farm produces Norwis, Russet, Yukon Gold, and Red potato varieties. The potatoes are of such high quality that people drive hundreds of miles just to get a 50-pound bag. During the Fryeburg Fair, fair-goers will see potatoes from Green Thumb Farms at

many of the food vendors’ locations. Campers stop by the farm to pick up their winter supply before returning home, a fall tradition for families who value quality Maine potatoes.

As he watched the value of the potato crop decline over recent years, Donnie couldn’t help but think that there had to be a way to add value to the Maine potato and highlight the state’s potato industry heritage. “I figured, if we’re not going to eat them, let’s drink them,” according to Donnie.

For more information, visit [www.coldrivervodka.com](http://www.coldrivervodka.com) or call (207) 865-4828.

For photo requests, samples, or to schedule an interview with Cold River Vodka’s Director of Sales and Marketing, Bob Harkins, contact Jen Beltz at (207) 699-5502 or [jen@frontburnerpr.com](mailto:jen@frontburnerpr.com).