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In last issue’s editorial column, I touched on the need to sustain the momentum in the BC craft beer movement. Part of the inspiration for that message was the declining public interest I and others involved with What’s Brewing have perceived when it comes to the organization that birthed this publication and to which many of us belong: the Campaign For Real Ale Society of British Columbia (CAMRA BC).

Since its beginnings in 1990, it’s been this publication’s privilege and occasionally its duty to report candidly on what goes on at CAMRA. An interesting situation arose this spring when members of the once-strong Vancouver branch received an email communique explaining why there was no CAMRA Vancouver AGM nor elections held this year. The advisory stated that the tradition of separate regional executives is being replaced by area “committees” reporting to CAMRA BC’s central executive. Unlike the large CAMRA Vancouver AGMs of the past, the only election scheduled was for the BC exec (held March 10th in Victoria).

Further to this, there was the threat that, if new committee leaders were not forthcoming, the Vancouver branch would be wound up and its (once considerable) assets would revert to CAMRA BC. We have information that at least two candidates were interested, although nothing has been confirmed to the YVR members yet.

In recent years, membership in, and support for, BC’s pre-eminent beer drinker’s consumer advocacy group has trended downwards. The widely perceived root cause is public belief that the war for good beer has been won, so consumer advocacy is no longer necessary. I write here to assert that this conclusion is natural, but wrong.

Beginning about 15 years ago, CAMRA played a seminal role in establishing craft beer culture in Vancouver. Consider the changes that might occur there over the next 15 years as market forces and political realities influence its hard-won golden age of craft when there is no people’s voice to be heard. CAMRA has been at the table when changes in BC legislation were discussed, and in the public eye pushing for continued change to match what consumers enjoy in other jurisdictions (travel and see). There is still a place for its leadership in advocacy and education, and its prominent voice.

Many distinguished members of the BC craft community cut their teeth as CAMRA volunteers and executive. Since you’re reading this, you’re pretty interested in BC craft beer. Consider getting involved yourself, because CAMRA needs an injection of energy and talent. The email address provided is secretary@camrabc.ca
Summer is a great time to be a craft beer fan. There’s nothing like getting out in the sun with your friends and sipping on a few delicious beers from breweries near and far. This year we have a great variety of festivals to choose from, with more specialized festivals than ever before.

The season starts on June 1 with **Hopoxia in the Phillips backyard**. This hop lover’s event brings together 45 of BC’s finest craft breweries and cideries to showcase hops as an ingredient. [phillipsbeer.com/hopoxia2019](http://phillipsbeer.com/hopoxia2019)

The following weekend, June 8–9, sees the 10th annual **Vancouver Beer Week Festival** at the PNE. This two-day event features 100 vendors pouring more than 300 beers and ciders! [www.vcbw.ca](http://www.vcbw.ca)

If you’re looking for something a little more exotic: check out the **2nd annual Craft Beer & Wilderness Retreat** taking place at Nootka Sound Resort from June 8–12. Hang out with brewers in a luxury resort, learn to drink and brew great beers, and much more! [craftbeerandwilderness.com](http://craftbeerandwilderness.com)

July 9 brings the 5th annual **Farmhouse Fest**. This unmissable (but sold out) event is by far my favourite of the year and focuses on farmhouse ales, lambics, and sour beers from some of the world’s best breweries. [farmhousefest.com](http://farmhousefest.com)

On July 27, The Drake in Victoria is taking over Victoria’s Market Square for their **fifth annual Thirsty Chef event**. This fun event features amazing food from local chefs and great beers from some of the region’s top breweries. [drakeeatery.com](http://drakeeatery.com)

August 24 brings the first annual **Fruit Beer Fest** to Abbotsford. This specialty event features tons of curated small-batch fruited wild farmhouse ales, fruited ciders, fruited milkshake IPAs, fruited kombuchas and more! [www.fruitbeer.ca](http://www.fruitbeer.ca)

On September 7-8, the **Great Canadian Beer Festival** returns to Victoria. This is the first year that the Victoria Beer Society will be running things, so I’m excited to see what changes and improvements they make! See our back cover. [www.gcbf.com](http://www.gcbf.com)

The summer season closes out September 14 with the **Whistler Village Beer Festival**. Use coupon code WHATSBREWING2019 to save 25% on tickets to this popular event! [www.wvbf.ca](http://www.wvbf.ca)

Details and ticket links for all of the above events and more can be found in our Top Picks calendar at [whatsbrewing.ca/calendar](http://whatsbrewing.ca/calendar)

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Are core brands a thing of the past?

>> ADAM CHATBURN

This past February, beer writer Stephen Beaumont launched #FlagshipFebruary, a social media campaign encouraging beer drinkers to consider brewery core brands over ‘seasonal’ offerings. “Just because a beer is new or unusual doesn’t mean that it’s good,” he tweeted. The many breweries that retweeted their support appeared to be chiding their clientele for drinking the very brews they themselves have been bringing to market with dizzying frequency.

February is a notoriously quiet month for beer sales. As “Dry January” rolls over into the year’s shortest month, many breweries struggle with cashflow, so advertising campaigns designed to get you back into bars and liquor stores are nothing new. Neither are the tasteless Super Bowl ads for tasteless macro lager. Case in point: this year’s AB InBev corn syrup controversy, or their 2015 “Pumpkin Peach Ale” campaign which inexplicably attacked their own recently-acquired Elysian Brewing. To me, Beaumont’s campaign seemed similarly tone-deaf.

Back when the craft explosion was just beginning, it seemed that every new brewery followed the same strategy: launch with a basic lineup of solid but uninspired classics like a pale ale, an IPA, a lager (or maybe a Kölsch to save time) plus a seasonal like a stout or porter. It was a proven method for the time, but in a rapidly maturing market that constantly seeks new tastes and sensations, we seem to have outgrown this model.

In the Craft Beer Business Fundamentals course I teach at SFU, I explain why the core brand model exists, and why it’s rapidly becoming obsolete. The main reason for it is contracts, since bars, liquor stores (especially government stores) and restaurants typically don’t change their tap lineup very often. It’s disruptive and expensive to curate new lists, blow out old stock, reprint menus, train servers and so forth just for a new beer. Also, many regular customers like their regular beer.

With close to 180 breweries in BC, and a conservative estimate of four core brands per (some have none, some have over a dozen) that’s about 720 core beers in the province. All too often this core still comprises a lager, a pale ale and an IPA, which then proliferate in liquor stores.

Invariably I’m left a little cold by core brands. Although they may be technically proficient and have broad appeal, they tend to be less imaginative. This committee thinking is what landed us with drinking the very brews they themselves have been bringing to market with dizzying frequency.

If you’re a brewery visitor like me, there’s not much draw to try a beer that you’ve had a dozen times already unless it’s genuinely exceptional. Even when I do plump for a classic, I’m often left disappointed. Have you ever thought “not as good as it was”?

Personally, I’m always fascinated to try something new and limited. Indeed, this was part of the approach when I was at Callister Brewing: new beers all the time. Oddly, the sole exception was my Blackburn Bitter — our only “core” brand.

Some vocal brewers claim, as did Dageraad Brewing’s Ben Coli in a recent article in The Growler, that core beers are usually their best work. Coli wrote, “The best beers are the ones that the brewers are working on constantly, the ones that are designed with balance and drinkability in mind.” While I think that “best” is subjective, I agree that constantly refining a recipe can help it to improve. However, it can also have a negative effect, taking it away from the classic we all fell in love with. There’s a long history of brewery owners looking to save a few bucks by cutting corners with core recipes.

Coli continues, “At the end of a long day of work, those thirsty brewers aren’t reaching for a glass of marjoram-kopi-luwak-jelly-doughnut kolsch, they’re reaching for their brewery’s trusty pale ale.” This is often true, although the desires of the brewer are not necessarily the desires of the drinking classes.

I think we all have some “core” beers that are a happy go-to. For me they include Strange Fellows’ Talisman, Driftwood’s Fat Tag, and my favourite, Parallel 49’s Old Boy (although I’ve been enjoying their Oak Bay variation lately). I hope there will always be a personal loyalty to some cores, but I freely admit that I’m ever eager to try something new and potentially risky. It just seems to me that loyalty to a single beer harkens back to a prehistoric time when beer drinking dinosaurs were defined by their brand: Lucky Lager, Labatt’s Blue and all the rest.

I’m sure #FlagshipFebruary will be back next year, and if you’d like to commemorate it with a core beer, that’s great. Don’t let anyone shame you into skipping a seasonal, though. Every now and again a brewer might catch lightning in a bottle (and maybe win a bunch of awards and add that seasonal to their regular lineup). That’s part of how we’ve grown such a creative craft beer community.

Adam Chatburn

is a home and commercial brewer, beer educator and past President of CAMRA Vancouver. Follow him at @real_cask on Instagram and @realcask on Twitter. He doesn’t post very much but when he does it’s awesome.

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BEER FESTIVAL EXPERIENCES:
SERVING UP MORE THAN THOSE FOUR OUNCES

>> MIKE ANSLEY

Every year as the days get warmer and longer, we reach that magical time of year: beer festival season. It’s when beer nerds flock to open fields and town plazas to queue up and sample tiny glasses of the latest and greatest the industry has to offer. For breweries, this creates an ideal situation.

A beer festival is one of the most cost-effective ways to engage with a new audience and receive instant feedback about beer, branding, and trends. Where else, other than their tasting room, can a brewery get a massive group of their target market in one place, ready and willing to give their uninhibited feedback? Festival goers are often happy to offer their opinion, especially after a few little glasses of beer. Unfortunately, many breweries don’t seem to realize how much more there is to serve at a festival than a four-ounce sample.

At many festivals, a beat-up beer pouring cooler (aka “jockey box”) and beer-stained menus are a common sight. So are unenthusiastic staff pouring something that’s on tap in their tasting room or already out on shelves. The age-old service statement, “people won’t remember your beer, they won’t remember your booth, but they will remember how you made them feel” is as true at a beer festival as in a tasting room. Consider these two different experiences:

SITUATION 1:
Festival Attendee: “Hey! What are you pouring today?”
Beer Pourer Joe: “We’ve got our IPA and a Saison.”

SITUATION 2:
Festival Attendee: “Hey! What are you pouring today?
Beer Pourer Joanne: “Hey! We’ve got two for you today: our head brewer’s pride and joy, the Whatchamacallit IPA, plus a new experimental brew we’re testing out, the Sandalwood Saison. Give us your opinion on Instagram using this hashtag, because after the fest, we’re awarding a lucky winner a free tour and tasting with one of our owners!”

The brewery and pourer in Situation 1 don’t recognize the opportunity in front of them. They’re at the festival because they feel like they should be there. The brewery in Situation 2 clearly cares about its customers’ experience. They’ve created an engaging story around their products and a memorable narrative around their brand. Situation 2 also offers an opportunity for the guest to leave feedback without feeling pressured or awkward about giving it in the moment. Furthermore, they have allowed for an opportunity to interact directly with the brewery outside of the festival.

Which of these situations is more likely to lead to a future relationship with the customer? Which brewery is likely to have their beer chosen from a menu on a future occasion? Which is more likely to have a beer festival patron try their beer again? The answer is obvious.

Quality theming around a booth can get expensive. But with a little creativity, anything is possible. You don’t need a big budget to add a few signature items that increase the customer experience and create an interesting story. Look at the more comprehensive booths for inspiration and think of parallels appropriate for your brewery’s marketing themes. If budget allows, invest in something flashier than a tent and jockey box. [Example: Old Yale Brewing’s beer serving trailer.] When these signature items have been created, they must be cared for. A dented, scratched, stained presentation reflects those same unsavoury qualities onto a brand.

Even though theming is fun and exciting, the best investment is in creating a memorable experience for the festival guests. Like a tasting room, a beer festival is “live, experiential marketing” — an in-person opportunity for customers to engage with a brand and develop an emotional connection. Customers want to peek behind the curtain and shake hands with the people involved; they want to feel like they know a secret and belong to something bigger than the product.

It’s time for more breweries to develop the beer festival marketing strategy past a four-ounce sample and into an engaging dialogue that starts a meaningful relationship.

Mike Ansley
By day, Mike works in marketing. By night, Mike’s alter ego The BeerRater offers an unfiltered view on the world of craft beer.
When looking back on where BC’s craft beer revolution evolved, the province’s two largest metropolitan areas come to mind. Victoria’s brewpubs and breweries became a cradle of craft in the 1980s and ‘90s, then during the current decade a new kind of culture developed in the modern tasting rooms of East Vancouver. But the movement is strong in the province’s interior as well. That’s why some folks refer to a certain South Okanagan city as ‘Beer Town, BC’.

The population of Penticton is only slightly larger than Port Moody’s, but before year’s end it will boast seven craft breweries (including a cluster to rival Brewers Row in a small, walkable part of downtown). Newbies on the block will include Slackwater Brewing as well as Neighbourhood Brewing, founded by the same folks from Yellow Dog Brewing who started it all in PoMo.

It turns out that Penticton, chosen as Expedia.ca’s #2 beer town in Canada last year, has had a strong craft community since there were just two or three breweries. Credit in part goes to its highly respected annual Okanagan Fest of Ale, held for the 24th time this past April. Today, the bond between local breweries is exemplified in the highly active Penticton Ale Trail marketing collaborative [see Kim Lawton’s column in this issue — Ed.].

At the 2019 Fest of Ale, What’s Brewing discovered a trait that several of Penticton’s breweries have in common: they are family operations, with multiple generations strongly involved. In this issue’s cover story, we find out what it’s like for parents and offspring to work together on a business as challenging as a craft brewery, in their own words.

CANNERY BREWING

Ian Dyck was born into his job. Ten years old when his parents founded a brewery, Ian was already a hospitality industry veteran thanks to the family’s original business, legendary restaurant The Country Squire. Its pastoral hometown of Naramata BC, in the hills of grape-growing country by Okanagan Lake not far from Penticton, had long been a favourite getaway destination for wine tourists. After opening in 1980 the Squire, now retired, became a locus for food and wine service. Maitre d’ Ron Dyck was well known as an engaging host with a very respectable wine palate, and chef Patt prepared meals that complemented the regional vino; getting your label in the cellar at the Squire was highly desirable. As the local vineyard and winery industry expanded rapidly in the 1980s and ‘90s, Ron, Patt, and The Squire became part of that growth.

“Back in the day, it was a pretty big deal to be on Ron’s wine list,” Patt recalls. “People would leave the restaurant and go buy what Ron had on his list.”

Not that The Squire didn’t serve beer. “We carried the best local beers we could find,” Patt reminisces. “Tin Whistle, Mt. Begbie.” Back in the 80s and 90s, finding craft beer would have been the tricky part.
Not only was the locally-famous Squire building Ron and Patt Dyck’s first venture, it was also their home. Son Ian’s childhood began there in 1990.

“Living upstairs above a restaurant: it was a pretty different lifestyle than most kids,” he understates. When he was old enough to pitch in, Ian helped out with things like yard work around the home; it had to look good for guests, after all.

The fourteen-hour workdays a restaurant demands took their toll over the 23 years the Dycks operated the Squire. When Ian’s schedule demanded more trips into the city, Ron and Patt got serious about getting out of hospitality and spending more time with their son before the window of youth closed. They heard the call of craft beer and in 2000, The Cannery Brewing Company opened in a former fruit and vegetable canning warehouse in Penticton. The new business eventually brought parents and son together in ways they hadn’t imagined.

But first, there was a two-year overlap period, during which the Dycks kept The Squire going while the Cannery was open. In that startup phase, Patt remembers wanting a break from writing gigantic cheques. “Somebody go out and buy something for $35,” she’d tell Ron, looking forward to the day when not every purchase involved four- or five-digit numbers.

Asked who fell in love with beer first, Patt says, “It was both of us, certainly. It had so much flavour and seemed like it had so much potential. The process of this thing that’s alive, and with so few ingredients. Small changes in brewing temperature or time made such a difference to the flavour that was coming out in the end. It was pretty exciting, and it was a change from wine. There were getting to be so many wineries, it was nice to get involved in another industry.”

What would a twelve-year-old boy think of leaving behind a restaurant for a brewery? Ian recalls, “It was always interesting. There was always something going on. Always something that needed to be fixed.”

That amusingly realistic anecdote about a youngster’s perspective speaks to Ian’s mature level of curiosity about the family’s business operations. Of course, a brewery owner of any age can identify with the sentiment expressed. Patt describes their old bottle labeller as the most ridiculously sci-fi looking and heaviest thing ever. “A forklift could barely carry it,” she insists.

Once that labeller was safely set up and working with no serious casualties, packaging became the order of the day. Ron would fill up their Honda Odyssey with Cannery’s classic 1L swing-top bottles (complete with decorative ribbon; see photo!) and administer his charm to pub owners and retailer buyers around the province. Ian, following in his father’s footsteps years later, found that sales contacts would regularly ask about his dad and had strong memories of meeting Ron a dozen years ago or more.

When the brewery was young so was Ian, which made for some comic situations. For instance, the Naramata Fair, an annual August event, had a beer garden. Minors weren’t allowed, so Ian and his cousin would hang out in a fenced-off channel just outside, like puppies in a dog run.

Then there was the time that Ian had karate class on weekends, held in the Penticton Trade & Convention Centre complex. The Okanagan Fest of Ale is held in that same PTCC each April, so Ian had to deal with the inconvenience of his karate class being moved because of a bunch of breweries. As we come full circle, the former karate kid is now the boss at one of the Festival’s cornerstone vendors.

As Ian got older, he was able to contribute more around the brewery outside of school time. There were bottling weekends where he helped with labelling. When he could drive, he did countless beer deliveries in Skruffy the cube van, long before he was old enough to drink.

Eventually, Ian and his classmates grew old enough to imbibe, and of course, the guy who had access to beer was guaranteed to be popular. “In high school, all of a sudden I was getting invited to all the parties,” Ian recalls. Natch, everyone wanted to see him walking up with a keg. Mom clarifies that he wasn’t necessarily always allowed to do that! But “it was great to be able to share something my family made,” he proudly relates.
TIN WHISTLE BREWERY

Meet The Tin Whistle Brewing Co., the first modern brewery in the South Okanagan. It opened back in 1995, its name a reference to the first locomotive on the local Kettle Valley Railway.

In 1998, the brewery was bought by Lorraine Nagy. That meant a lot of hands needed on deck. Lorraine’s son Mike got involved, helping in the transition phase with various things the brewery needed. At the time, Mike’s career path lay elsewhere so, when things settled down, he moved on.

Tin Whistle went about making a name for itself with a number of interesting beers based around ingredients like Okanagan fruit and honey. A regular fixture in the BC liquor retail landscape, their core products, known as the “Trunk Line” in keeping with the railway theme, are instantly familiar to anyone who’s been shopping for beer over the last couple of decades.

Fast forward to 2014 when, after many years away, Mike came back to work full-time at Tin Whistle. Within about a year of his return, Tin Whistle made its biggest move to date: migrating from its original location (now occupied by Highway 97 Brewery) to the former warehouse-based location of Cannery Brewing (after Cannery moved downtown in 2015). The new location allowed the brewery and tasting room to expand considerably.

No doubt Mike has seen a lot of changes, not only in the brewery but in the BC beer scene in general. “I’m enjoying the way the craft beer industry has evolved over the years”, Mike observes.

As for his role at Tin Whistle: it’s broad. “My duties encompass all aspects of the brewery from clerical to production, sales, and even deliveries. There is never a dull moment or uneventful day”, he confirms.

Lorraine has been happy to have Mike back on board. “He’s opened many doors for us”, she relates. “He’s certainly attuned to the 25- to 50-year-old age bracket, which has enabled us to be in touch with that age group.”

Mike also brings to the table his own personal interest as a hardcore snowmobiler. As with the other breweries in Penticton, identifying with the local lifestyle comes naturally, and that includes outdoor activities. Thanks to Mike, the business has a strong connection with winter sports.

Making connections is a big part of surviving this long in a landscape that’s only become more competitive. “The beer business is very people-oriented,” Lorraine notes. “If you love being out with people, entertaining people and making good friends, you will love the beer business.”

That aspect of enjoying one’s work is an important part of being self-employed, especially when you’re in the brewing business. It has its perks, including amongst one’s circle of friends. As Mike admits, “My friends love beer, so when I walk in with a bunch, I am pretty popular!”

But running a business isn’t always peaches and cream, even when you brew a beer with that name. Asked what it’s like from his perspective to work in a multi-generational family business, Mike shares that “My mother and I have a unique relationship in which we recognize each other’s strengths and trust each other to do things.” He says that they’ve established good working protocols for stressful times at the brewery.

Lorraine talks about the time the team was trying to find a name for a new hazelnut expresso stout. “Everyone had a name they thought was ideal”, she recalls. “We were arguing about this until Mike threatened to storm off if we didn’t pick his idea. I laughed and said ‘OK, that’s the name: The Extortionist’. It fits, because the beer is dark, exciting and edgy.”

It’s pretty tough to avoid having the business creep into conversations during family time. As Lorraine says, “We try to avoid talking shop outside of work hours, but sometimes it happens! The brewery is an integral part of our lives.”

Tin Whistle has been a big part of Lorraine’s life for over two decades, and now, as things come full circle, it’s something she can proudly share with her son.
HIGHWAY 97 BREWERY

During the summer of 2016, What’s Brewing met Highway 97 Brewing Co. owner John Kapusty as he was renovating the old Tin Whistle Brewery location to create his dream business. John already had significant entrepreneurial experience because he and wife Jennifer had already been operating their other business, ECM Promotions (printing and corporate promotional products), for two decades by that point. But just as it was for Ron and Patt Dyck, transitioning to beer manufacturing was going to be a bold, challenging move.

The brewery’s doors officially opened in March 2017, and it was truly a family affair. Jennifer handled administration while John (who has a background in the ski hospitality industry) took on general management. Then there were the couple’s three boys, who became part of the team right from the beginning.

Christopher, the oldest, is an electrician, which was of course handy in building a brewery. He also picked up his Serving It Right card early on and started pouring beer as well as doing deliveries and all kinds of things. Chris now lives in Midway BC with his fiancée Emily and works in the oil patch, but he’s still part of H97, helping out whenever he’s in town.

Cam, the youngest, is studying at the University of Victoria. He and his girlfriend Lily have both been part of the brewery over the years. Like Chris, Cam is too remote to be part of the current day-to-day operations, although his Island location enables him to liaise there on behalf of H97 when needed.

That leaves one more son: Nick Kapusty, a 25-year-old BCIT marketing graduate, who is still very much in Penticton and actively involved. For him, Highway 97 is an opportunity to apply what he’s studied: brand building. He’s currently committed full-time to the brewery—more than full time, according to Dad. “He’s learning what a start-up is all about: putting in extra time and getting paid less”, John candidly shares.

But he’s had a significant effect on the brewery. “I think he’s done a great job with our cans and our packaging”, says proud papa, who defers to Nick on the label designs. “He works with our artist Neil Tougas closely. They [being the same age] see eye to eye.”

The team is very happy with their highway-related marketing tagline, Life’s a Road Trip. John confirms “We’re skiers, we’re mountain bikers. We’re really into the outdoor lifestyle focus of our brand”.

Nick also works with the brew team on recipe development. “When we first started our concept, we weren’t going to make many beers; we were going to keep it to just six”, recalls John. “But the market kept asking for more.”

For instance, John admits he was originally strongly against doing a sour. But he eventually opened up to it after repeated input from the younger generation. “I was OK losing that battle”, says John, who now enthuses “There are so many cool things you can do.”

The multi-generational mix has had its advantages in other ways. There was the time John and Jen were manning the H97 booth at their very first Fest of Ale. For whatever reason, they weren’t getting traffic; nobody was approaching them. Then Nick strolled into the booth and started pouring beers. Within minutes, a lineup of young female beer fans materialized in front of him.

“It was to the point it was embarrassing”, remembers Mom. The parents had to accept that their son (and his girlfriend Allie, who often helps at the brewery and the festival booths) had the look that was attracting younger attendees to try their beers.
BAD TATTOO

If you live and work in the South Okanagan business community, you might know the Agur family. Involved in highly successful hospitality and real estate enterprises and well respected for their business acumen, they were able to bring significant experience to the task of creating a craft brewery (along with partners) five years ago.

“My parents Robin and Janice have been amazing role models, and I aspire to create a life like theirs”, says Lee Agur, an accountant by training and the driving force behind Penticton’s Bad Tattoo Brewing Co. “They are extremely supportive, and make life and business significantly easier for me.”

Lee, who manages the brewery, is no slouch himself. This relatively young man is widely perceived to be exceedingly bright, and What’s Brewing has certainly found this over the years when we’ve spoken with him. But it turns out that the brewery has a youthful management group in general. “Four out of five of our main managers are under 35 years old”, Agur notes. “I believe it brings more energy and excitement to the business. We’ve been very fortunate to create the culture that we have.”

Bad Tattoo is among the minority of smaller BC brewers that constructed a purpose-built building (like Sooke Brewing and Riot Brewing). It’s a smart 8600 sq.ft. facility with a spacious area for an expanding brewhouse plus a 115-seat lounge, including a 1000 sq.ft. covered patio.

Aside from five core beers and seasonals, Bad Tattoo’s secret weapon is their menu, featuring only one category of food: quite likely the best brewery pizza in BC. With rotating flavours like Ham & Apple, Spanakopizza and Falafel, the pies from their rock oven pizzeria have become legendary. Their notoriety went up two notches this spring when they launched their Crocodile Filet pizza with real Australian croc meat.

Thanks to their food-primary license, Bad Tattoo is family-friendly, even brewing its own sodas, enabling it to become part of the wider community. As Agur understates, “I think we’re very well embraced here.” When we visited, they had just hosted a couple of birthday parties; one was for a seven-year-old girl, the other for a seventy-year-old woman. Both of the birthday girls got to pick where their families went and both chose Bad Tattoo—a brewery. Think about that.

The compelling combination of hospitality, craft beer and gourmet pizza almost caused a stampede when Bad Tattoo debuted. Lee tells an amazing story of the brewery’s planned “soft opening”, notable for how “un-soft” it was.

“We broke ground January 14th 2014, and we opened six months later, which is very fast for this size of building”, Agur notes. “For the month leading up to opening, we were in here 100 hours a week.”

On July 4th of that year, they decided on a soft opening date the next week. “We had no front-of-house staff yet, so we did a quick hiring round, thinking this was going to be a low volume place at first”, Agur shares. “Our A.C.P. Golden Ale was the first beer we released. We finished kegging it at 2 AM the night before opening.”

Media wanted to cover the event, but they were told to wait for an official grand opening, perhaps toward the end of July. Turns out that day never came. It wasn’t needed.

On Saturday, July 12th, 2014 at 11 AM, Bad Tattoo opened its doors. At 11:05, there was a lineup. “In our wildest dreams, we thought we’d do forty pizzas that day. We served over 200”, Agur recalls with some pain. “We were severely understaffed. I called in my mother to work as hostess, my sister to help take payments and my wife to bus tables.”

It was an unstoppable tidal wave. “At one point, there was an hour wait to get in, and an hour wait to get served. But nobody left.” Agur remembers, “People would walk by on the street, and you’d hope they’d keep walking. Then you’d see them...”
look over and turn in towards the brewery. You’d think, "oh no", but you’d say, ‘Welcome to Bad Tattoo!’”

During those first weeks, Agur was asking friends who were just in Penticton on vacation to work in the brewery. “We had to buy more food and quadruple the staff. We’d say to guests, ‘Thank you for coming in. Please don’t tell anybody about us for two weeks.’”

After the trial by fire, things got under control, but the visitors’ enthusiasm remained. Lee has talked to out-of-town guests who found Bad Tattoo when in Penticton on a week’s holiday, then came back every day of their vacation.

Naturally, the fact Lee opened a brewery is also popular among his circle of friends. But was it a shock? “I was nicknamed KeggerAgur by a few friends growing up as I always seemed to have a keg of beer with me at parties”, Agur admits. “So, some were a little less surprised than others.”

There is definitely Bad Tattoo beer at Agur family events these days. But they try to keep the shop talk to a minimum. “Family/work balance is extremely important to us”, the Agurs told What’s Brewing. “We try to talk more about family than work.”

Lee isn’t the only Agur offspring with business instincts. “I have three sisters, all of whom are entrepreneurial”, he shares. “We’re able to help each other when problems inevitably arise, which is pretty cool. We have ‘kids’ meetings’ every once in a while to help each other out with personal or business issues.”

Working with family in a multi-generational situation isn’t always easy. Asked whether there have been difficult or awkward times, the family jokes, “No, everyone agrees with everything all the time.” More seriously, they share that “We certainly have disagreements; however, in the end it comes to trust and we all deeply trust each other. So we decide on the best course of action and move forward.”

The Agurs are no strangers to hard work and long hours. Mom and Dad recall the time Lee was working late at the brewery when his wife Martina dropped in. She tried to wait for him to finish but fell asleep on some bags of malt in the brewhouse. At 2:00 am Lee needed a break so he poured some beer out of a tank. He ended falling asleep in a chair in the tank farm. The couple had an unplanned overnight at the brewery.

It’s not all grim. Asked what the family likes about the beer business, the Agurs point out that “It’s quite unique in the fact that it is so collaborative. There is a lot of sharing of ideas, and help is always there if you need it.” This is evidenced by the fact that Cannery Brewing, now only blocks away, was quite supportive when the new brewery was in development.

The family concludes. “Beer is a lot of work, but why not have fun, and enjoy what you are doing? It adds a lot of quality of life.” No matter how big or small Bad Tattoo may end up, it seems that the Agur family have something they can truly enjoy together.
“Growing up in the Okanagan, we were like missionaries; we had to teach craft beer to people”, he says. Later, Ian went off to college in Victoria, where the beer culture was miles ahead.

“Ian has a really good palate,” Patt opines. “He spent his college beer drinking years immersed in the craft beer capital and came back with all sorts of ideas for great things.”

Back in the day, young Ian was of course paid for helping around the brewery and can claim a Dyck family first: the privilege of cashing a Cannery paycheque, well before his parents had that luxury. Today, Ian has a different kind of stake as an owner himself.

His business card displays his title as “Suds Slinger”. Asked what he considers his role, Ian says, “a little bit of everything. I manage the sales team.” Before that, he paid his dues as a roving sales rep. “I was on the road for quite a few years when I was selling beer,” he recalls. A father himself now, he values the ability to be home more.

Asked if she had always wanted Ian to end up in the business this way, Patt says she hadn’t really thought about it. When you’re family, life just sort of happens, and the next thing you know you’ve started a business that can provide for not only your offspring, but theirs as well.

It all just sort of happened...just like it was somehow always meant to be.

That advantage soon won’t be year-round because Nick, who’s played for the Slovakian national lacrosse team, is moving to Vancouver for lacrosse season. That doesn’t mean Highway 97 will lose him for good, though. Having someone on the ground in BC’s biggest market gives the brewery a chance for a bit of face-to-face business development.

The brewery also has accounts up and down its eponymous highway corridor, as far north as Fort St. John. Kapusty knows his business will always have growth constraints, starting with the brewery’s dimensions. He’s thinking about creating additional space by building upward and adding more floors; the additional on-site storage would certainly be welcomed.

“We tried using a separate warehouse to store product, but we kept running out of stock before we could build the inventory”, John shares. “Demand kept outstripping supply.” Thankfully, the addition of two new 30HL tanks this summer will help with production capacity. As for seating capacity, they’ve added a patio out front, which helps a bit in summer.

Mind you, the customers probably feel that Highway 97 is just dandy as is. Designed with an open-concept layout, it feels like a big ol’ neighbourhood house where locals can come in and just hang out. Its two-level build allows guests to look down into the brewhouse and witness work underway, which people love. One impressed first-time visitor told John, “I’d been drinking beer for 47 years, and I’d never seen it made.” She stayed for five hours!

Pinned to the wall is a gallery of photos entitled “Revy & Roxy’s Beer Buddies”. Named after the proprietors’ beloved dogs, it features numerous shots of the clientele’s canine friends as a warm community touch.

Highway 97 is also an active member in the community of local brewers making up the Penticton Ale Trail. John recalls that the BC ski industry was very close and tight when he worked in it, and notes with appreciation how the Beer Town breweries also work together well: “We know that a rising tide floats all boats.”

“It’s the true small business side of craft beer”, as John sees it, assessing candidly that “We’re a really unsophisticated little company. We may not be as dialled in and efficient as some of the craft juggernauts like Phillips or Central City. It’s a labour of love.”

The extended Highway 97 family includes a tight-knit team of local students who make things go, particularly the brew crew of Shawn and TJ, alongside Nick. As for working with actual family, mother Jen says “We talk beer all the time”. Of the multi-generational mix, Papa John concedes “There have been some intense moments. We don’t always agree on everything.” But still, he concludes that “It hasn’t been awkward. It’s definitely been fun.” As it should be, when your family is fully heads up that life is indeed a road trip.

Dave Smith
Editor of What’s Brewing & Beer Me BC, contributor to various beer publications. Craft fan since the late 1990s. CAMRA BC member since 2004. Files BC beer reviews and Cascadian travel stories as duo BeerSeekers along with wife Ivana.
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As I wait to board my flight, I’m feeling an overwhelming sense of pride for what we accomplished by working together. People often talk about how much camaraderie there is in the craft beer industry. This is not just something that is said; it is lived, breathed, and shown.

Thirteen of us from Penticton journeyed to Calgary for the festival. We heard tremendous feedback from guests that hung out in our Penticton Ale Trail lounge, enjoying our beers, taking their turns at beer pong, and chatting with all of us who love Penticton and the Okanagan.

As we head into tourism season, I’m reminded of all the reasons I love living here. As you start thinking about your vacation plans, I thought I’d share with you a few of my favourite things about the Okanagan, as seen through the eyes of a craft beer lover.

1. Get outside and get active. From almost anywhere in the Okanagan, there’s quick access to the Kettle Valley Rail Trail. Enjoy a hike along the water, out to the little tunnel in Naramata, or high above the lakes. Pause and soak up the sunshine and savour the incredible views along the way. End up at one of our area breweries to cool down with a delicious craft beer.

2. Hit the markets. The Penticton Farmers’ Market and the Summerland Sunday Market showcase the glorious colours of the rainbow in fresh, locally grown produce, herbs and fruit, alongside delicious coffee, baked goods, artisan items and more. You’ll often find breweries, wineries, cideries, and distilleries at the markets, so you can enjoy a sample or two along the way. And of course, lunch and a flight afterwards at a brewery.

3. Take a tour. The fine folks at Grape Friends Tours will pick you up in an eight-passenger SUV and drive you around like a VIP on their Beer Buddies tour. Or customize a tour to include breweries, wineries, cideries and distilleries. If you prefer to earn your beer flights, check out the Spirited Brews Cruise from Hoodoo Adventures. Enjoy a guided cycle tour where you can take in the picturesque Kettle Valley Rail Trail above Okanagan Lake, enjoy a picnic, and then take a brewery and distillery tour.

4. Get festival fever. We celebrate the season with festivals and sporting events all summer. Whether it’s the Penticton Beer Run, Penticton Elvis Festival, Peach City Beach Cruise, Ribfest, Granfondo, Penticton Scottish Festival, Peach Festival, Penticton Dragonboat Festival or Penticton Jazz Festival, there are loads of cool festivals, many of which feature a beverage garden with refreshing local craft beer.

5. Eat up. We have a fabulous culinary scene here. Whether you want to enjoy a luxurious meal at a winery restaurant, hang out on a patio, or nosh from a food truck, you won’t go hungry. Besides the eats at our local breweries, many restaurants also feature local craft beer. A few of my faves are Brodo, Craft Corner Kitchen, The Station Public House, The Nest & Nectar, and the lakeside patio at the Barkling Parrot.

There is so much to do here. Climb Munson Mountain, float the channel, hit the greens, jump in the lake, have an ice cream while you walk along the boardwalk, and tour the historic S.S. Sicamous. The list goes on and on. Check out the BCAleTrail website to help plan your trip to the Okanagan.
ABOUT THIS STYLE

One of the benefits of the craft beer movement here in the new world is the resurrection of extinct or nearly-extinct old world beer traditions. Possibly the best example this craft-crazy decade is the explosion in popularity of the formerly-obscure German beer style known as Gose.

This ancient ale evolved about a millennium ago in and around the Lower Saxony town of Goslar on the river Gose. The style is in essence an unfiltered wheat beer, which means it has something in common with the weisses and weizens associated with Berlin and Bavaria—but its salty, tart, and fruity character is vastly different.

What makes Gose so interesting to brewers and drinkers is its unique, thirst-quenching salinity. For hundreds of years, the Goslar area was a centre of mining, with rich mineral and salt deposits in the local soil and in turn its underground water aquifers (contrary to popular belief, the river is not itself the source of the salt).

At the end of the 19th century it was in full production in Gosenschanken, the taverns around Leipzig where it had become popular. Unlike regular breweries using tanks and barrels, these beer halls would open-ferment the beer in specialized tall bottles.

Today, craft brewers create a kettle sour using bacteria that converts sugars to lactic acid, then add the necessary coriander and salt to get the flavour close to the Leipzig style. Gose is a bit lower than average in alcohol content, making it the perfect summer refresher.

THE WINNER IS:

Field House has taken the crown this round, and in definitive fashion. Given the fact that they’ve been known for distinctive sour beers from the outset, this is not shocking. The name Sour Wheat Gose tells you exactly what to expect, and despite its modest ABV it packs a punch as the sharpest, most strongly tart beer in the bunch.

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**MEET THIS ISSUE’S PANEL**

**Warren Boyer:** BJCP Certified home and commercial brewer, and past President of CAMRA Vancouver.

**Ted Child:** Recognised BJCP beer event judge and homebrewer. Reviews beers for BeerMeBC.com and books for WB.

**Adam Chatburn:** home and commercial brewer, beer educator and past President of CAMRA Vancouver.

**Carnell Turton** of **Breward Inlet:** if the beer isn’t good he’ll say it.  

**Mike Ansley,** The **BeerRater:** offering an unfiltered view on the world of craft beer.

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**PRODUCTS REVIEWED**

The beers evaluated this round included:

1. **Driftwood Cry Me A River Gose**
   - ABV: 5.0%
   - See Review
2. **Field House Sour Wheat Gose**
   - ABV: 3.8%
   - See Review
3. **Moody Ales Flamingose**
   - ABV: 4.3%
   - See Review
4. **Red Racer Lime Margarita Gose**
   - ABV: 5.0%
   - See Review
5. **Torchlight Sakura Gose**
   - ABV: 4.5%
   - See Review
6. **VIB Magic Hour Grapefruit Gose**
   - ABV: 2.4%
   - See Review

---

**SCORES FOR THIS STYLE GROUP**

A general overview of how this style did as a group. Pie chart tip: start at top of legend and work clockwise from 45 degree mark (3 o’clock) >>

**COLOUR**

- Extra Pale/White: 33.3%
- Pale/Straw: 33.3%
- Yellow: 33.3%
- Gold

**CARBONATION**

- still: 16 (51.5%)
- lively: 7 (22.3%)

**CLARITY**

- hazy: 1 (3.3%)
- clear: 3 (10%)

**BALANCE**

- 19 (63.3%)
- 12 (40%)
- 11 (36.7%)

---

**Panel scores include these five categories. For a full list of individual scores, turn to next page.**
**Driftwood Cry Me a River Gose**  
*23.2/30*

- 25: Fruity tartness with a salty edge. Finishes tart and puckering.
- 24: A bit more challenging, this one is tart and salty. Leaves a slight puck-er in the cheek.
- 26: Driftwood doing what they do. Immensely drinkable, technically flawless, stylistically aware and on point.
- 17: A solid entry that goes down easy, Driftwood have made a (IMHO) text book gose. Lovely saltiness that edges onto brininess, a touch of spice, and a lovely level of tartness. The fruitier goses are good too, but this shows what can be done if you stick to the style guidelines.
- 24: I'm lucky enough to have travelled to Leipzig to try the modern proto-type of gose, and this is a fine west coast facsimile.
- 25: I have no idea why anyone would be crying a river of this little taste of heaven. One might say it's a great way to introduce someone to goses. In fact one must say that, because that is exactly what it is.

---

**Field House Sour Wheat Gose**

**Red Racer Lime Margarita Gose**  
*20.2/30*

- 25: Tart but balanced with floral notes. Clean finish.
- 22: A bit more challenging, this one is tart and salty. Leaves a slight puck-er in the cheek.
- 21: A big pineapple juice flavour, more reminiscent of a pina colada than a margarita. Some saltiness on the finish to balance the sweetness.
- 20: A well balanced affair, as is to be expected from Central City. Howev-er, if I’m choosing a margarita gose then I want a sharper lime, a touch of orange in the background. a noticeable saltiness and maybe even some tequila heat. A fine gose, but margarita doesn’t do it justice.
- 18: Lime Margarita could be a really great take on a Gose. Personally, I just can’t get over the lime-salt flavours that seem to dominate my palate. Perhaps with some tweaking this beer could be a game changer.
- 23: Me encanta cómo Red Racer hizo esta cerveza. No, no es estilística-mente precisa, pero es una cerveza realmente agradable que sabe muy parecida a una margarita en las rocas. Voy a beber varios este verano.

---

**Torchlight Sakura Gose**

**Warsaw**

**Ted**

**Warren**

**Adam**

**Carnell**

**Mike**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beer</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Aroma</th>
<th>Palate</th>
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<th>Impression</th>
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<td>7.2/8</td>
<td>8.8/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field House Sour Wheat Gose</td>
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<td>4.0/6</td>
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<td>21.2/30</td>
<td>2.2/3</td>
<td>4.0/6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>21.8/30</td>
<td>2.0/3</td>
<td>4.0/6</td>
<td>24/3</td>
<td>6.0/8</td>
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**Torchlight Sakura Gose**
- Tart but balanced with floral notes. Clean finish.
- Accurate of the bunch with little to no perceptible salinity. I still enjoyed it however, especially with the right amount of salinity joined to the party deserves a medal. The right amount of pucker combined with the right amount of salinity joined forces to make this a delicious brew.

**Field House Sour Wheat Gose**
- Tart bite leads to stone fruit flavours and a clean puckering finish.
- A gateway Gose with fairly mild tartness, salinity and wheat characteristics. A bit thin bodied. A good thirst quencher.

**Moody Ales Flamingose**
- Malty, grainy base to balance the sour. Citrusy bitterness.
- Good grapefruit and lactic acid presence throughout. Like a gentle grapefruit juice. Not much gose or even beer-like flavors here. Hint of salt on the finish.

**VIB Magic Hour Grapefruit Gose**
- Fresh, light, refreshing, and crushable. This little buddy drinks much more like a radler than a gose, but you do get that welcome hit of salt on the finish. At 2.5% you could drink this all day long and still make it to your in-law’s Sunday BBQ in good form.

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ARE YOU TOUGH ENOUGH? #TKCHALLENGE
When choosing the women for my Women and Beer interviews, quite often I have yet to actually meet them. I read or hear about them through articles or social media, and if I am intrigued enough to know more I will contact them. For The Beer Farmers’ Brenda Miller there was all that, and more!

I was not only intrigued, but was really impressed and felt that she would be a great role model for women wanting to get into the brewing industry. She breaks several of the stereotypes, as she is not a man, does not have a beard and she is not under 30. Brenda, who grew up running a family-owned potato farm, is a mother of 5 boys. It was not until her very late thirties and early forties that the craft brewing world captivated her enough to start her path as a brewer.

Thanks to the world of the Pink Boots Society, I have finally had the chance to meet Brenda and some of her family — and maybe one of these days we will brew together! Please meet Brenda Miller of Pemberton Valley BeerWorks, also known as The Beer Farmers.

Q & A WITH BRENDA MILLER, HEAD BREWER

What you and your husband Bruce have created is unique to Pemberton. What role did you play in its conception?

30 years ago, I mentioned that a brewery might be a good idea on our farm. It was just beginning to be a possibility to have a craft brewery in BC back then, thanks to the vision and efforts of John Mitchell and Frank Appleton.

When I started homebrewing, my intent was to brew a beer from ingredients on our farm. I spent a great many of the following years carefully pitching the idea that a brewery might be a good fit for the future of our family farm. One day, Bruce gave me a great birthday present: the registered trademark for The Beer Farmers.

What role do you play now?

I brew all the beer. My oldest son Will is the business manager. My husband Bruce farms the barley and hops, as well as the potatoes, sheep, and hay.

Do you feel respected in your role?

It’s fun to see the reactions of people when they learn that the brewer is a woman. It has been a very fun, positive experience.

It reminds me very much of Crannog Ales in Sorrento—organic, small-footprint farmers. Were you looking at that model?

For 126 years our family farm has been producing potatoes, followed by grain and grasses. Although we are a fully-certified organic farm, we make no claims of being an organic brewery like Crannog Ales. We made the decision to not restrict the brewery to be certified organic just yet.

In the past, our grain has been kept to feed cattle and other livestock. After a few years of experimenting with barley varieties to see which ones grow best in our climate, we began the enormous task of converting our potato storage barn and packaging shed into an on-farm brewery and tap room.

Continued on page 30
Our goal has always been to create a beer that showcases the complete terroir of this place and the history of Pemberton. We have even cultured our own yeast strain from beehives on our farm and are very excited to have started barrel aging these ingredients, allowing time to do its thing.

What kind of training/schooling have you had?

A few years back, while off work with an injury, I took the concise brewing course from Siebel Institute. Then, prior to opening the brewery, I worked as an apprentice at Coast Mountain Brewing in Whistler when they first opened.

I also spent years in a laboratory propagating potato cultivars; this laboratory experience has proven invaluable in brewing beer. I took courses to become a sommelier, not to practice but to travel more viscerally. While my boys were small, I studied to become an herbalist as well as a nutritionist. It was a Crannog Ales potato beer that sent me down the rabbit hole of brewing. After drinking that beer, I spent the next eight years obsessing, brewing, and endeavoring to learn every minute detail of brewing a great beer.

What do you love about your job and the industry?

More than anything else, it has been the people I’ve met. The folks who are growing and shaping the craft beer industry have been such a wonderful, inclusive, generous group. It is an industry I feel very privileged to be a part of.

Are there advantages/disadvantages to being a woman in the industry?

The only disadvantage I see is that the brewing industry has grown up very male-centric, making everything bulky and heavy, causing me to have to ask for help from time to time.

Any advice for other women in, or wanting to get into, the industry?

Just do it. It’s a growing industry full of opportunities.

You joined the Pink Boots Society in 2018. Why did you join, and what are you hoping to get out of it?

In all honesty I didn’t have a clue what to expect from joining the Pink Boots Society. Such a nice surprise to find a caring, supportive, informed and curious bunch of women who have a genuine interest in supporting others. I look forward to continuing to be a part of Pink Boots.

Who is your favourite female in the industry?

Tanya Crocker from Coast Mountain. She and I have had the opportunity to work together quite a bit in the last few years.

Tanya and I had a ton of fun brewing the Pink Boots Brew at Coast Mountain in 2018, thanks to all the great support from Kevin and Angie Winter and the whole crew there. So much that I am looking forward to having Tanya come to our brewery this year to help introduce the wonderful world of brewing to a group of women from the neighborhood and my family.

Tanya changed professions to become a brewer. I admire her for taking that leap. She is lovely, smart, enjoys what she is doing, and it shows.

What is your favourite beer from your brewery, and why?

I am most proud of my Lager. I worked endlessly getting this beer to my liking and am finally able to sit and enjoy it without looking for things to change...for now.

What is your favourite beer outside of your brewery?

What I like to experience in a beer changes often. I have always been impressed with everything barrel-aged, soured, and blended. Right now, I am obsessed with Belgian beers with notes of pear and high carbonation levels.

What is your biggest achievement to date?

Of course, I consider my life opus to be my five sons. I really enjoyed that the brewery brought something for us to work on together. All of them have played a part in the creation of it, from the engineering and building of the bottling equipment, to the design and build the taproom, to the mounds of paperwork, and the fun job of pouring beer for customers. It has been a fantastic experience to share as a family.

What goals do you have for yourself and the brewery?

I want to continue making new beers with local ingredients and create an environment where people can come and enjoy the family farm experience like a locals.
We are Northwest Hop Farms—a full-service hop farm and hop distribution company based in beautiful British Columbia, Canada.

From our family farm in Chilliwack, we harvest, package, and ship hops to 17 countries worldwide. In addition to our own hops, we partner up with the best farmers in B.C., U.S.A., and around the world, to offer over 180 varieties of quality hops to the brewing industry.

Our mission is to raise the profile of our many partner farmers in the area, as well as to promote the resurgence of hop farming in British Columbia. We are incredibly passionate about hops and the craft brewing industry and we are excited to share our passion with you!

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www.northwesthopfarms.com

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Three years ago, as documented in the Summer 2016 issue of What's Brewing, I traveled up the Sunshine Coast to Powell River, across to Courtenay in the Comox Valley, and then south to Victoria, stopping at every brewery along my route. Back then, the newly conceived BC Ale Trail was still rolling out, and there was no North Island trail as there is today. Since then, several new breweries have opened in the mid- and North Island, so it was time for a re-visit.

My first stop was newly opened Land & Sea Brewing Company. This 99-seat lounge and brewery in Comox is only a block from the building that housed ill-fated Surgenor Brewing ten years ago. I met up with head brewer Tessa Gabiniewicz to learn more about Land & Sea and the beers they create.

Tessa was introduced to commercial brewing at Nelson Brewing Company, where she worked with veteran brewer Mike Kelly. She moved to Terrace a few years later and helped set up Sherwood Mountain Brewhouse before moving to Comox. She helped Beach Fire Brewing and Nosh House get started and then moved to Vancouver to work with Dave Varga at 33 Acres Brewing Company. Land & Sea’s owner Jason Walker brought Tessa on board in April 2018. The tasting lounge opened in mid-December.

Land & Sea has a 15 hl brewhouse with four unitanks and four serving tanks. Kegs are available for local pubs and restaurants. They have a kitchen with a small menu of interesting dishes including a tuna cobb salad and gluten-free options. Tessa tells me the pickle chip dip is excellent.

I tried five of the beers; the sixth had blown out just before my arrival. Tessa told me that the beers will be always rotating, to keep it interesting.

First up was the Glacier Cream Ale. Brewed with a substantial amount of corn, it has a lovely sweet corn flavour balanced out by Crystal hops. Next, I tried the Spruced-Up Blonde. Floral aroma with a hint of spruce tips; this is not your average blonde. Breakwater Bitter is a northwest-style ESB. Paradise Meadows IPA is a more subdued and balanced version of a northwest IPA at 6% ABV. Snowbird Session Stout is quite sessionable at 3.7%. It is a dry Irish stout, so there is not much sweetness to compete with the roast flavours. Kölsch and Berliner Weisse will be the next to hit the taps. They are planning on one litre cans for off-sales.

Ace Brewing Company is setting up shop just off of the main drag in an interesting space in Courtenay. The building is hexagonal, with a central skylight providing natural light to the space. Owners Jo-Anne and Kent Landolt are installing a 20 hl system from Innovative Stainless Solutions. Brewer David Macanulty (formerly of Vancouver’s Yaletown Brewing) will be making the beer. They are hoping to be open summer 2019.

Although Gladstone Brewing was open the last time I was in town, this was my first chance to visit since Tak Guennette took over head brewer duties. The beers have improved under his direction and they have plans to expand. The formerly neighbouring pizza place has moved out, and now that kitchen space houses Gladstone’s own fancy burger bar.

They have some interesting ideas to make the room feel like it’s not attached to the Comox Centre Mall including plastered walls, salvaged materials, handmade rustic furniture, concrete tabletops, and textures with sound control in mind. A massive openable window will bring together the patio and inside space. A small kitchen will be serving Aussie meat pies and other items that pair well with beer.

A Kölsch-style beer will be one of their flagships. They are planning an IPA and a raspberry kettle sour for summer. A dark ale will round out the lineup for opening day.

New Tradition Brewing is being built at a shopping mall in Comox by homebrewer and contractor Pat Savard and his business partner, Tim Jolley. Pat’s wife will be managing the 100-seat lounge. They are hoping to open their doors in late summer 2019.

New Tradition Brewing

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Cumberland Brewing has expanded since my last trip, so I popped by to take a look. Anders Petersson has taken over as head brewer, with Caitlyn Carlisle and Gabrielle Lavoie-Bartlett working the brewery. They took over the space next door, which allowed them to move their walk-in cooler and create more space for the brewery. This also added some seating to the lounge. They have built a larger kitchen and provide local and fresh food options.

They had a solid lineup of options on tap. The Forest Fog unfiltered wheat beer is delicious and accounts for 43% of overall sales. An English bitter and IPA were available for the expats. Red Tape pale ale is made exclusively with malt from Philips and local Vancouver Island hops, making it 95% BC-sourced and at least 75% Island-sourced. Finally IPA is their northwest style IPA, the result of 18 months of experimenting. Dancing Linebacker oatmeal stout is a dry Irish stout: “a big fella but he is light on his feet.” It sells well year-round; some fans drink it through the summer. A barley wine was available for those who felt like a dessert beer after their flight. At six months maturation, it was balanced and not warm. It will age well.

The ‘Beer It Forward’ chalkboard was still going. Patrons can purchase beers for community groups or regulars, and it gets written on the board to be redeemed next time they visit. A good community place for lunch and to read through a copy of What’s Brewing.

Unfortunately, Forbidden Brewing was not open when I was in Courtenay. I hear that they have updated their brewhouse; I would have enjoyed checking it out again.

As I was talking with brewers, I kept hearing about Wayward Distillation House in Courtenay. I dropped by to see what they are up to and I was blown away. Located at 2931 Moray, they are making high quality mead (honey wine) then distilling it to make their premium spirits. Going through 130,000 pounds of honey last year, Wayward projects using up to 200,000 pounds this year. They have Drunken Hive rum with caramelized honey that recently won a gold medal at the Canadian Artisan Spirit Competition.

Unruly Vodka has a bigger body than most vodkas and is very smooth, living up to its gold medal. The Elixir Craft 151 is incredibly smooth and doesn’t burn at all. Unruly Gin has a citrus aroma from local coriander and imported sweet orange peels, juniper, and sarsaparilla for a gold-medal-winning example. A bourbon barrel special release of Unruly Gin is renamed as Char #3. It could be used in place of a whiskey in cocktails. A raspberry-and-ginger infusion uses almost half a pound of local raspberries per bottle. It smells and tastes like fresh raspberries and would be great with sparkling water. Another gold medal winner: Depth Charge, infused with cold-pressed coffee and cacao nibs; it also comes in a barrel-aged version. Krupnik is their gold-medal-winning Polish-style spiced honey liquor, back-sweetened with some honey. Would be nice in a dry apple cider.

Beach Fire Brewing and Nosh House has been serving up craft beer and amazing food in Campbell River for more than two years. Twenty-two full time employees serve a 60-seat lounge, with 20 more seats on the patio. Brewer Darrin Finnerty has four core beers: High Tide Pale Ale, Beach Blonde Ale, Nut Brown Ale, and Pumphouse Pilsner. It sounded like the Wheel-Bender Stout is available year-round as well.

Ember Red Ale was on tap during my visit, as was a Berliner Weisse collaboration with Land and Sea. A radler, a nitro stout, and a Buch Blonde (kombucha with blonde ale) are on offer. Every Tuesday is small-batch night, where they experiment with flavours such as Hazelnut Nut Brown Ale, Moscow Mule, Raspberry Blonde, Blueberry Berliner Weisse, and a Strawberry-Basil Berliner Weisse. They plan to have 16-oz. cans available for take-away soon.

The food menu board changes twice a day. Items that sell out are wiped off and new items are added for lunch and dinner. Chef Laura Gosnell creates share plates and tapas-style eats made from scratch using local ingredients. The blue-cheese deviled eggs with peppered bacon were easily the best deviled eggs I have ever had.

The furniture for the tasting room was custom-built except for a couple of restaurant seating units that came courtesy of a local restaurant’s renovation. The tabletops are made from the old floor joists from the building renovation and the foot rail on the bar is an old plumbing pipe. Light fixtures from a local school gymnasium help the locals feel comfortable and nostalgic.

Campbell River is lucky to have Beach Fire Brewing and Nosh House, an inviting and comfortable space offering amazing food and delicious beverages.

It’s exciting to know that, next time I am on the North Island, there will be several more breweries to visit. Craft growth across the province doesn’t seem to be slowing down at all. While on your summer travels, follow the BC Ale Trail to explore and find the new breweries popping up. You will arrive thirsty and leave inspired.
Island Craft: Your Guide to the Breweries of Vancouver Island

BOOK REVIEW

>> TED CHILD

Not long ago, my father treated me to lunch at a coffee shop near my home of Sidney, BC. As I compulsively do, I looked at the magazine pile, and was pleasantly surprised by a notice in one of them about an upcoming new book on Vancouver Island craft brewing entitled Island Craft. I searched my memory trying to recall where I knew the author’s name from. I eventually realized that Jon C. Stott is the author of 2010’s Beer Quest West, a guide to the breweries of BC and Alberta.

Beer Quest West was one of the first books I reviewed for What’s Brewing, along with BC-focused beer books by Leo Buij, Lisa M. Morrison and Joe Wiebe. Although Wiebe produced a second edition of his Craft Beer Revolution and continues to regularly write articles on BC beer, the other authors have been less visible. Also, outside of Frank Appleton’s memoir Brewing Revolution, there have been few (if any) books focusing on BC beer in recent years. It’s nice that at least one author has returned to writing about our beer scene.

Stott, though, doesn’t just write about BC. He has written a book about beer in New Mexico, where he now lives, and another about Washington and Oregon Coast brewing. I gave Beer Quest West a positive review those many years ago, and it seems that writing two other beer books has honed Stott’s craft all the more.

Although Stott now lives in New Mexico, he was born and raised on the Island and celebrated his twenty-first birthday at the iconic “Ingly” (Victoria’s notorious Ingraham Hotel). His first-person narrative works perfectly for this book as he recounts the history of the Island and its brewing. His writing is as approachable and engaging as is his subject matter. Reading this book, I realized how little I know about the Island I live on.

Island Craft is now automatically the reference for any question relating to brewing history on the Island. For instance, the day I opened it, Island Craft resolved two debates I’d had recently (since I know you’re super curious: Blue Buck was not one of the first beers Phillips released, and Clay Potter wasn’t the original owner/brewer of Moon Under Water). Beer guidebooks generally have a somewhat limited shelf life, but Stott’s strong research and thorough history lengthen this book’s long-term value.

If Island Craft will age like a fine barley wine, it’s also as fresh as a wet-hopped IPA. When it arrived in the mail, it had that ‘new book smell’ and was (I swear) still hot from the printing press. The production values are noticeably higher than Beer Quest West’s, with glossy pages and colour pictures. Stott’s writing is even fresher. Beer scenes change constantly, which can make a book out of date by the time it prints. Island Craft does not suffer from that problem. If I understand correctly, Stott took his research trip in November of 2018 and I finished reading in mid-April 2019. That’s an incredibly quick turnaround to write and publish a book. To put that in perspective, it’s a little over two issues of What’s Brewing ago. That’s how fresh this book is.

Reading Island Craft, I realized how much I’ve been neglecting the craft beers brewed here. Stott describes breweries I knew little to nothing about. It’s almost like I have an unconscious bias against hometown and island breweries. I’m so busy hunting down the latest trending beer or brewery from Vancouver or the US that there’s a lot I’ve missed.

Stott uses interviews from his previous book’s research to show how much the craft beer scene on the Island has changed and grown since 2010. If the reformed liquor laws have allowed Vancouver’s beer scene to explode, they have also allowed Island craft brewing to make radical changes. There is much to celebrate about Vancouver Island beer and this book is a great resource when exploring it.

If there’s a theme running through Island Craft, it has to be ‘Lucky versus Local’. Although Lucky Lager hasn’t been brewed on Vancouver Island in over 30 years, it still commands a remarkable amount of brand loyalty here. But now the Islanders are learning about the joys of fresh, locally made beer that actually supports the community and doesn’t smell like loyalty to a foreign-owned corporation. Jon C. Stott has admirably done his part to spread the word.

Ted Child is a Recognized BJCP Beer Judge and award-winning homebrewer. He is also What’s Brewing’s in-house book reviewer. Look for his assessments of the latest beer books and publications in each issue.
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At What’s Brewing, we’ve covered the following events for many years and watched the local communities grow their beer scenes.

**PARKSVILLE UNTAPPED**
*Tigh Na Mara Resort*  
*Feb 21st, 2019*

The organizers always put on a good show with a great mix of presenters. We enjoy visiting with the breweries and tasting the fresh and local hand-crafted food. A special mention above and beyond goes to Love Shack Brewing for its absolutely magnificent hand-crafted small batch beers.

This event rotates annually between Tigh Na Mara and The Beach Club Resort. Watch for it next year. Civilized and respectful of the craft, it’s good value and a fun time in a relaxed atmosphere.

**ALBERNI HOPS FESTIVAL**  
*Mar 23rd, 2019*

This event sells out each year. They offer a trade session for an hour and then open the doors for the main event. It’s very energetic, though it has fewer breweries than other festivals.

Brewers and cider makers put full enthusiasm of the craft into their efforts. Local, hand-crafted foods are always part of event, and every year Pete’s Mountain Meats brings a full array of European-style sausages. He is a strong supporter of this event and his community. Cheers to his family for their annual contribution. Thanks to all in Port Alberni.

**NANAIMO BEER FEST**  
*April 5th, 2019*

This event has helped the Nanaimo beer scene grow year after year. The organizers offered VIP entry, which gave attendees some extra perks before the main event. Once doors open to the public, it’s full speed ahead all night.

What’s Brewing has attended and covered this event for more than two decades as Nanaimo has become a beer destination. Thanks to all the folks in Nanaimo who said they follow our publication!

**OKANAGAN FEST OF ALE**  
*Penticton B.C.*  
*April 12th - 13th, 2019*

A number of the What’s Brewing team members were on hand to enjoy this prestigious and grand event. Truly lots of fun.

There was an exceptional number of breweries and cider makers, great choice in food, lively and diverse entertainment, and a strong festive atmosphere throughout the two-day event. Particularly impressive was the number of new brewers on the scene. We enjoyed meeting you all and talking all things beer and cider with you.

Well done volunteers and fabulous folks up that way. If you haven’t ever gone, it’s a fantastic event. Watch for it next year.

Scottie McLellan is a craft beer industry veteran who has written for What’s Brewing for over a quarter century.
The name ‘BeerSeekers’ was born six years ago when, after our umpteenth brew tour in Oregon, the two of us thought “this trip was really interesting, and we just have to tell people about it.” Fortunately there was a journal to which we could submit our story: What’s Brewing, which at the time was available bimonthly only to CAMRA BC members. A lot has changed with WB since then! As we found out recently, a lot has also changed in the city that inspired our literary career: Eugene, Oregon.

After years of driving to Portland then branching out to Oregon’s other reservoirs of beer (e.g. Bend, Hood River, Salem, Astoria, McMinnville and the Oregon Coast), we shifted gears in spring 2013 and embarked on a railway excursion care of Amtrak’s Cascades line. Its trains link downtown Vancouver with Seattle then Portland before terminating in the Beaver State’s third largest city. We heard the call of the rails again this year, so we settled into our seats and headed south in comfort with a bottle of Ninkasi Brewing’s Oatis oatmeal stout and free WiFi.

A very solid beer town, Eugene currently has 17 breweries and counting (including the secondary outlets a few own). Compare that with our Kelowna, 80% the size of Eugene but with only nine breweries (five more coming though!). Based on this, local visitor bureau Lane County Tourism rolled out a mobile app for its Eugene Ale Trail late last year. Much like the one that our own BC Ale Trail has recently deployed, the program rewards you for being a good beer crawler. We tested it out firsthand and tallied enough brewery visits to earn some of the booty shown above.

Similarly, in 2013, we visited a rapidly growing brewpub in neighbouring Springfield named Hop Valley. Sadly, in 2016 it sold to MillerCoors. The upside is that it has a huge new location close to Ninkasi, and its products can now be found in bars and sports stadiums all over the West Coast—which is what happens when the money comes in. But Eugene’s two biggest breweries are not the focus of this story; we have newer things to share.

Like many successful brewers, Director of Brewing Operations Dan Russo started homebrewing in college. He also worked for Rogue Ales for many years before landing at Oakshire. He says the brewery is known for its diverse portfolio of beers, as well as their pilot program which allows them to try “crazy ideas for beer that actually work.”

Try to get to Oakshire on a Tuesday around 6:00 pm for their weekly beer release. On our visit they tapped Brachiosaurus, a delicious hazy DIPA. It was part of their Dinosaurs Will Die series, so named for the “prehistoric brewing industry that doesn’t like new styles”. Both Dan and Director of Retail Operations...
Hannah Child strongly suggest that you plan a visit around their annual Hellshire Day (June 15th this year), focusing on rare barrel-aged beers from around the USA.

**Downtown Eugene**

The many breweries and beer bars in and around downtown Eugene are easy to walk to. Let’s start with Falling Sky Brewing, which has been a big part of the Eugene scene since 2012. It now operates three locations: the original brewpub, a Delicatessen, and a Pizzeria. Each location has different beers on tap, but all the production occurs at the brewpub.

Head brewer Scott Sieber says he’s a homebrewer at heart, beginning his career in the local homebrew shop. There was a stint at Rogue before he returned to the homebrew shop, then co-founded Falling Sky. His flagship beers include three IPAs, but their portfolio includes an ever-changing varied selection of solid, great-tasting beers. Sieber enjoys experimentation—his constantly expanding brewhouse has a pilot side for his experiments with interesting ingredients—but he maintains that all their beers start from a good solid base.

Claim 52 Kitchen is located around the corner in a bright, modern space. Their tap list includes no less than six IPAs, three of which are hazy. Notable was Raspberry Beret, a delicious deep pink, slightly tart Sour IPA. This ‘Kitchen’ is a secondary location, with the original limited-hours brewery at another location.

Although it’s hard to tell from the name, The Wheel Apizza Pub is an excellent brewery as well as an Italian East-coast style pizzeria. Head Brewer Tobias Schock’s extensive brewing history includes Hop Valley and the innovative but now-defunct Agrarian Ales. He is interested in fun, new-age brews—taking an established style and plugging in unique ingredients or processes to make something new.

Toby’s line of lagers represents that fusion of old world and new. The Quest Pils is his search for the perfect pilsner to pair with their menu. Along with their hazy IPA, it’s become one of their flagship beers and Toby describes it as “the cheese pizza” of their lineup. Having drank pilsner in the Czech Republic last summer, we can say Schock’s really hits the mark. With 11 beers on tap there is something to tickle your fancy.

**Springfield USA**

Downtown in Eugene’s neighbouring borough, Springfield, you’ll find a wall mural provided by Portland-born Matt Groening, creator of The Simpsons. It’s a tribute to the town that inspired the setting for his cartoon series. Near that, you’ll find Plank Town Brewing, a Springfield original. Serial hospitality entrepreneur Bart Coridio opened this seminal brewpub back when the town was decaying and helped kick-start its revitalization.

Head Brewer Steve van Rossem notes he was a homebrewer “before it was legal”. After extensive experience at McMenamins and Block 15 Brewing, van Rossem helped design the brewhouse and takes great pride in its solid, tasty beers. The brewery focuses on classic UK, German and Belgian styles using high-quality ingredients. Taps include two cask lines and two nitro at all times.

Why put a brewery way out there? Founded by brothers Doug and Brian Coombs and friend Matt Van Wyk in late 2016, Alesong is not your typical brewery. Brian and Matt both come from beer, having worked at Oakshire, but Doug has a background in wine, and therein is the key to their difference: their art involves blending barrel-aged brews much like vintners do.

Alesong wasn’t intended to be just another industrial brewery, partly because that model is already highly competitive, and because of the founders’ vision. All their beer is brewed offsite, then barrel-aged, with a typical timeline of eighteen months from start to finish. They like to create using various local fruits, and their proximity to grapes allows them to do wine-beer hybrids. While they have a couple of standard seasonals, those change depending on what they put into them and which barrels they go into. There are over 300 barrels in their cellar at any one time. The resulting esoteric liquids are never the same twice.

The same care that goes into the beer also goes into the food, showcasing top-quality local ingredients. Coridio describes the experience as fine dining in a casual atmosphere, and after enjoying a meal there, we’d have to agree.

**A Song of Beer in Wine Country**

About a 30-minute drive out of town through some lovely Oregon wine country, you’ll find Alesong Brewing & Blending. Its tasting room sits perched atop a hill overlooking a stunning valley, next door to King Estate, one of the biggest wineries in the area.
Alesong is coming to Vancouver’s sold-out Farmhouse Festival in July, so if you’re lucky enough to be there, make sure to check them out!

**AROUND TOWN**

For those interested in some points of interest besides the beer, Eugene is a lovely town with many things to do. You can drive up a winding road to Skinner Butte (Simpsons reference!), a local landmark rising about 200 feet above the town and offering an incredible view of Eugene and the valley below. Along the west-side base of the Butte you’ll find “The Columns”, a popular rock-climbing destination.

Back in town, the locals are rightly proud of Project 20 x 21, an initiative to have twenty murals painted throughout downtown by 2021. You can see many of them now as you stroll the town.

Lane County Tourism, the folks behind the Eugene Ale Trail, were kind enough to set up all these brewery touring opportunities and explain the local attractions. When we reached Eugene, we were welcomed by Lane County’s enthusiastic and knowledgeable rep Meg Trendler, who graciously took the time to show us around town on her own birthday!

Many thanks to Meg, Stephen and Lane County Tourism for the hospitality and a memorable time. Visit them online and map out your beer tour at EugeneAleTrail.com

Shout out also to our Eugene-based beer writing friend Aaron Brussat, aka ‘Beerstone’. He’s got a great map of the walkable downtown he calls the “Eugene Beer T”. Check it out at Beerstone.com/eugene-beer

See you on the Eugene Ale Trail! 🍻

The BeerSeekers
Craft fans since the late 1990s. Today they’re members of the What’s Brewing editing team. Join Ivana and Dave Smith in search of the next perfect pint in BC and around Cascadia, at beerseekers.com
In the Winter 2018 issue of What’s Brewing, I mused about organizing a photography-and-beer event to inspire all levels of photographers to document and shoot craft breweries. After the article was published, my professional camera supplier told me they had been thinking about a similar project. Synchronicity! The next step was to find a large enough brewery that would be agreeable to invasion by equipment-laden photographers.

Beau Photo supplied several recently released cameras and lenses from their extensive rental department, for participants to share. The camera geeks felt like kids in a candy store.

Red Truck Beer Company allowed us guided access to the brewery. The combined effect was Nirvana.

Our meetup started at 5:30 pm with a 45-minute shoot of the iconic vintage red pickup trucks outside in a light drizzle. One is their first delivery truck, a 1946 Dodge that owner Mark James named Old Weird Harold. We then moved inside to enjoy a pint and some delicious appetizers from their newly-released menu. I gave an introduction to the history of craft beer in BC, particularly the Brewery Creek area of East Vancouver.

Red Truck Beer sits on what was the estuary of the stream emptying into False Creek, before the area East of Main St. was filled in. It drained from Little Mountain and ran through Tea Swamp, and was a reliable water source in Vancouver’s dry summers. This area was the site of the city’s first suburb, Mount Pleasant. Back in the 1890s, the stream was lined with breweries, soda pop companies, and other industries using it as a water and power source. As time moved on, so did the breweries, and Mount Pleasant went through a downturn. This has all changed again, and a number of award-winning breweries again thrive in the neighbourhood.

Built in 2015, Red Truck Beer’s Truck Stop Diner and Brewhouse harkens back to the past with its classic look. It’s bigger than it looks from the street, too. Along three quarters of the perimeter of the taproom, there is an open five-story view of the brewery.

Descending into the working area (where beer is made 24/7), the photographers got a sense of the size of the tanks and the complex operation of a modern brewery. We even had the brewer pose for a few glamour portraits. Everyone went away with a feeling of great value for an evening where two industries shared their shiny wares for all to marvel at.

My dream is to for photographers of all levels to photograph breweries all over B.C. By the end of the year, there will be an estimated 175 craft breweries in this province. These are historic times. Maybe we can establish a community-shared resource where photos can be stored of each brewery.

Our next Craft+Camera event, scheduled for Wednesday, July 3, at 5:30 p.m., will again be hosted by Beau Photo, Red Truck Brewing, and Nikon Canada. You can expect to see some amazing new camera gear to try out. For more information and to register, contact Carol at admin@beauphoto.com.
March 16th, 2019 marked the first annual Verrücktes Donnerbräu Festival brew day for a group of Lower Mainland homebrewers. The fest, whose German title loosely translates as “crazy thunder brew”, was a two-part experiment that began as a wacky 3 a.m. idea in the twisted brain of Tim Vandegrift. The difference between most people’s wacky 3 a.m. ideas and Tim’s is that he is just wacky enough to execute his.

Tim asked the Vanbrewers homebrew club if anyone would be interested in brewing almost every style in the BJCP guidelines in one day, as a group. He says it took a few days to explain his concept, but then other members began to get on board and discuss the logistics of brewing 25 beers in one day. What kind of equipment would be required, how many set ups, and how many people?

A few key volunteers stepped up to help organize, including Vanbrewers President Leslie-Anne Stavroff, Canadian Homebrewers Association President Scott Butchart, David Haywood, Jeff Tichbourne, Graham Ballantyne, and Brian Rust. A space was found at Fraser Mills Fermentation Company’s newly leased building in Port Moody. The organizers found members with semi-automated brewing systems such as Grainfather and Robobrew to facilitate mashes done to order.

Graham and Kalinda Link helped Tim assemble the recipes, weigh and mill grains, and organize hops the night before the brew day. Each recipe was measured out into a bucket with a note of the hop additions and schedule.

Tim arrived around 7 a.m. on brew day to begin heating water. Bill Riley brought a massive pot that was used as a hot liquor tank (HLT), along with a pickup truck full of equipment. A dedicated HLT allowed for quick mash-ins without having to wait for the electric elements to get water to strike temperature.

Volunteers arrived around 9 a.m. and used a short and shoddy brew-day technique, allowing 20 minutes for mash and 20 minutes for the boil. Each of the 25 recipes was adjusted to compensate for lower efficiency. As each mash was drained off, the wort was collected into a kettle that went on to one of several propane burners for the boil. The next mash could be started right away. After cooling the wort and transferring into carboys, Leslie-Anne coded them for identification. A well-choreographed assembly line took form, and all 25 batches were knocked out and equipment cleaned up by 4 p.m.

To begin Part Two of the experiment, each carboy was passed to someone to ferment it. That person had no information on what was inside the carboy beyond what they can see, smell, or taste. It was up to that person to ferment the wort they had been provided with, hopefully using a style-correct yeast (or perhaps create a happy accident).

A tasting event is scheduled for Saturday, June 1st at 12 Kings Pub to judge the results. There, the judges will compare the finished beer to style guidelines that the recipe was designed for, taking into consideration what the fermenting participant thought the beer was, and judge how well the result stands up. By the time you read this, the event will have taken place.

Tim’s research indicates that no group has attempted to brew this many beer styles in one day before, never mind the criss-cross yeast game. He believes that they may have set a world record and he even contacted Guinness and applied to have it verified and recognized.

At next year’s event, Verrücktes II: The Revenge of Donnerbräu, twice as many brews will be attempted. You can follow along with the madness by following the Verrücktes Donnerbräu Festival 2019 Facebook page.

Verrücktes Donnerbräu sincerely thanks Vanbrewers for helping make it happen, Imperial Yeast for donating all the yeast, both Central City and Sundown Brewing Company for lots of malted barley, and Fraser Mills Fermentation Company for the space, water, and carboys. Next year should be even more fun. Now go make some beer!
or craft brewers, the quality of the ingredients they use to make beer is critical. Each of the natural products they source from their many suppliers can vary from year to year or even batch to batch. Among those ingredients, one category that brewers consider vitally important is yeast.

The number and location of commercial yeast suppliers has tracked alongside the steady growth and geographic expansion of the craft brewing industry in western North America. **Wyeast** of Hood River, Oregon, has been around since 1986. **White Labs** was founded near San Diego in 1995. **Omega Yeast** took root in Chicago and Portland in 2013, and Oregon’s **Imperial Yeast** started up in 2014. With the explosive growth of craft breweries in BC, it was natural that we should finally get our very own yeast company.

**Bright Brewers Yeast** has operated at their facility on the University of British Columbia campus since 2016. “We use selective breeding to create non-GMO strains with specific fermentation kinetics, flocculation, and flavour compounds” says Jessica Swanson, lead development scientist. “The wine industry has been using breeding to develop new strains for decades, but the techniques required to do this commercially for brewing yeast have only really been developed in the last seven or eight years, and we are excited to be at the forefront of this new wave.”

Bright Brewers is the craft-focussed division of **Renaissance Bioscience Corp.**, a biological engineering company that develops functional microorganisms for industries including food and alcoholic beverages. They develop new strains and license them to manufacturers for production and distribution.

Renaissance initially focussed on breeding out undesirable yeast characteristics. Example: the prevention of hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) production. Since the implementation of that core technology, they have turned their attention to breeding desirable characteristics in.

As a result of domestication, many brewing strains have lost the ability to sporulate and sexually reproduce. Multiplication of yeast cells immediately after pitching into the wort is entirely via budding, an asexual form of reproduction. This means their characteristics change very little over time, making it easier to produce a specific beer style consistently. However, selective breeding to alter these characteristics requires sexual reproduction. Some strains can be induced to sporulate by growing them on specific media with low nutrient content or subjecting them to some other sort of stress.

At its heart, the selective breeding process involves inducing an existing yeast strain and a strain with a desirable trait to both produce spores that can then fuse to create a new hybrid. This is done with a hair-width probe attached to a mechanical arm, which a technician manipulates under a microscope. The resulting new strain can then be further refined to produce a variety of different beer styles.

Large numbers of new strains are then put through small-scale fermentations using a standard wort. The resulting beers are analysed by an impressive array of equipment including gas chromatography–mass spectroscopy for volatiles, high-performance liquid chromatography for non-volatile flavour compounds, and ultra performance liquid chromatography for proteins and diacetyl. They are also put through a sensory review panel.

**CULTIVATING**

**YEAST: A HISTORY**

It was always easy to identify the barley ear with the plumpest grains, or the hop bine with the most desirable cones, but only in the last few decades has the technology developed to select, and selectively breed, yeasts.

Ale and beer were brewed for 6000 years before the agent responsible for fermentation was identified. In the Middle Ages, brewers skimmed barm off the top of the fermenting wort or collected some of the deposit from the bottom of the fermenter to use for the next brew. Otherwise, since ancient times yeast made its way into a brew simply by blowing in through the air, or sometimes via insects. It sometimes came from grapes added to the brew or was retained in nooks and crannies in the brewing equipment. No wonder the Sumerians prayed to the goddess Ninkasi for success!

Yeast cells were first observed under a primitive microscope in the late 1600s by Dutch scientist Antonie van Leeuwenhoek, but only identified as fungi in 1837 by German researcher Theodor Schwann. Louis Pasteur is best remembered for his pasteurization process, but arguably his more important contribution to society was proving live yeast produces alcohol by anaerobic fermentation.

By the late 1800s, variations among brewers in methods for perpetuating yeast had probably led to wide variations in strains, but only two main variants were known: top-fermenting and bottom-fermenting. The bottom-fermenting strain (used in lagers) gained cold tolerance by hybridizing with an exotic yeast species brought to Europe via early trade routes.

Crops like barley and hops only produce a new generation once a year, so suppliers are tempted to speed up development of new varieties by genetic modification of organisms (GMO). Yeasts can produce a new generation in mere hours, allowing for rapid selective breeding without the need to resort to genetic modification.

With the popularity of New England yeast strains and the current interest in Kveik strains from Norway, yeasts are really stepping into the brewing spotlight.
WE'RE OPEN IN OUR NEW LOCATION!
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Did we mention that real soon now you’ll be able to buy a beer while you’re here? And that there will always be at least two pro brewers around to answer questions—and sometimes as many as four or five? That’s because we’re also going to become (very soon!) Port Moody’s next Craft brewery, Fraser Mills Fermentation Co (FMFC). Our focus is going to be on making authentic, delicious beer, cider, mead, and wine. And if you like that beer you tried in the tasting room, why not pick up our recipe and ingredients and make it at home!

You’ll find us at 3044 St Johns Street
(2 Buildings east of our former location)

Want to know more and check on our progress? Give us a Facebook like @frasermillsfc check out frasermillsfermentation.com or give us a call 604 461 8891
Selected strains are scaled up in medium-size equipment familiar to most home brewers. Bright then works with commercial partners to trial their strains in full-size brewery operations.

As an example, Bright’s new Saison yeast had the gene responsible for diastatic activity removed so that it produces that classic fully attenuated dryness without the potential to ferment dextrins in can or bottle, which could lead to serious over-carbonation. Furthermore, if this yeast contaminates another used in the brewery, it will not cause over-attenuation in the beers produced.

Brewers typically collect yeast cells from one brew to pitch into the next. However, unless sophisticated lab facilities are present on site, a batch of yeast can only be used about seven to ten times. After that a fresh culture is needed, since there is too much potential for contamination or development of undesirable characteristics.

Bright Brewers Yeast now have over 5000 strains stashed away in their culture collection. Through their partners, Angel Yeast, Bright plans to release eight new products to commercial brewers by the end of the summer, including:

- An English ale strain with medium attenuation
- An American ale yeast with low ester production
- A New England–type strain which will develop tropical fruit flavours
- A cold-tolerant ale yeast for Kolsch
- A clean fermenting lager yeast
- A Belgian strain for high-gravity brewing producing dried fruit esters
- A wheat strain with improved consistency
- A Saison yeast with no risk of gushing cans or bottles

These will come as 500-gram packs of active dry yeast. Bright hopes eventually to supply home brewers, but that will require very different packaging and distribution channels.

One trait that will be of special interest to brewery owners is the capacity of certain yeast strains to release additional terpenes and thiols from non-flavoured compounds in hops. That means brewers can use lower amounts for dry hopping and still get the desired level of resinous or herbal flavours from the terpenes and tropical fruit flavour from thiols.

Bright Brewing’s rapid selective breeding technologies create the potential for entirely new styles of beer.

Bright’s scientists would very much welcome brewer input on the characteristics they are looking for in a yeast strain, by email or through their web site, www.brewingbright.com.

J. Random is a former VP of CAMRA Vancouver, occasional homebrewer and has written for What’s Brewing since 2003.
A BEER GEEK AT BC DISTILLED

>> TED CHILD

If craft beer in BC is reaching unheard-of success, the same is becoming true of craft distilling. As a result, there is an ever-increasing number of festivals for spirits lovers to choose from. One you should definitely mark on your calendar is the annual BC Distilled, now in its fifth year. It’s been on my wish list for a while, but this year I was lucky enough to attend.

I arrived in time for the trade/media hour along with a couple of serious spirits nerds from Vintage Spirits Liquor Store, where I work. It’s a good idea to have a plan or at least a wish list when attending this kind of festival, as there is just way too much to taste it all. However, pleasant surprises are part of the joy of festivals and BC Distilled has plenty of those. Broadly, I focused on the gins and then on the whiskies, but even that plan proved ambitious.

At a festival focusing on distilling in this province, terroir is an essential component. This expression of place has a definite impact on the gins and the botanicals used in them. As a lover of spruce tip beer, I was delighted to try many gins that incorporated evergreens into their botanical mix: spruce tips, grand fir, cedar and pine. This use of evergreens ranged from the subtle, as in Monashee Spirits’ award-winning Ethos Gin (which includes locally-foraged huckleberries, juniper, and wildflowers along with spruce tips and pine needles) to the dominant, such as Arbutus Distillery’s Forest Dweller (a coniferous aged gin that uses white spruce, grand fir, and pine). Other gins that use evergreens included Tofino’s Old Growth Cedar, Phillip’s Stump and Central City’s Queensborough.

Barrel-aged gins seem to have made strong strides since the last time I tried one. I tasted quite a few, but especially enjoyed the bigger, bolder gins that seemed better able to stand up to the oak and still be recognizably gin, such as Odd Society’s barrel-aged Wallflower, Wayward’s Char #3 and Dubh Glass Distillery’s barrel-aged Noteworthy. Gins are not the only liquor being barrel-aged with great success in BC, as The Woods Spirit Co.’s complex, barrel-aged Amaro testifies.

Further to barrel-aging and great leaps forward, many BC distilleries are approaching the age where their whiskies are ready for the market, so whisky in BC is starting to come into its own. I highly recommend Odd Society’s Prospector, a 100% rye aged in new oak which won audience favorite in the whisky category.

On the subject of great whiskies, I was very excited to meet Central City’s Gary Lohin. We had a nice chat about aging beers and whiskies in which he let slip that he had bottles of 20-year-old Thor’s Hammer stashed away, which is amazing to think about and probably even more amazing to taste. When I confessed that I had never tried his Lohin McKinnon whisky, Gary recommended the Peated Single Malt. I’m usually shy with peated whiskies but this one has that smoky campfire quality that I’m quickly learning to love. “You can taste the potential,” Gary rightly stated.

Festivals are a truly great way to shake hands and interact with the makers that you highly respect. Brennan Colebank of Duncan’s Stillhead Distillery voiced his determination to be patient with his whisky program, which he hopes will be ready sometime in 2020. His collaboration with industry titan Shawn Soole (a wild blackberry gin) has recently been released.

Another maker I met was Pacific Rim Distillery’s Luke Erridge, whose enthusiasm for the craft is contagious. He discussed his passion for foraging, as well as the unique terroir he utilizes in his gins. His passion for creating barrel-aged gins is evident in his creations, such as the Noteworthy Gin, which he describes as being “full of flavor and depth.”

At the end of the day, it was clear that BC is becoming a hub for craft spirits, withdistilleries producing some of the finest and most unique gins and whiskies in the world. It’s an exciting time for lovers of craft distilling in BC, and I look forward to attending future festivals to explore the ever-expanding world of BC spirits.

- Ted

For the full list of BC Distilled 2019 audience favorites, view this story online at www.whatsbrewing.ca.
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