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VOL. 29 ISSUE 3 FALL 2019
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August 23rd 2019: Spinnakers’ Paul Hadfield donates $10,000 to new KPU Brewing School scholarship in the name of John Mitchell. Full story & news release on our website. See page 8 for our tribute to John with photos from his Celebration of Life.

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Opening Remarks

Our cover story this issue features a cool little brewery in Coquitlam that you probably didn’t know much about, other than maybe a couple of their beers. Turns out that there is an interesting story behind Mariner Brewing. That’s exactly why we do our What’s Brewing Biography series—we love that our platform lets us weave deeper tales about the people of BC Craft Beer than any other media outlet, period.

We also love our covers, including this issue’s, which happens to feature Mariner’s founding couple but is actually centred on a mysterious glass of beer. There is a luminescent red glow around the vessel, complementing the distinctive colour of the liquid they’ve discovered. As you’ll find out in the story, that particular brew was a byproduct of Mariner’s weekly beer exploration series. Shout out to WB team member Navin Autar for his help on the cover art, and Brian K. Smith for the photo shoot.

This round we have contributions from a couple of special guests. Leif Miltenberger manages Hired Guns Creative, whose experience handling branding for beer and beverage alcohol clients has led them to create a really cool interactive BC brewery list and branding guide. Meanwhile, Dustan Sept of Beer Me BC is well known in the BC craft community for writing marketing analyses, and his latest essay takes a closer look at trends in BC beer production and sales. Check out his observations about the direction craft beer is heading.

Also in the Business of Beer category, Adam Chatburn talks about how sales of growlers (the jug, not the guidebook) seem to be tapering off. Turns out he was at the table when a key conversation was being held that may have affected the format’s fate.

There was a time when, for some folk wary of bitter ales, the term “craft beer” implied hoppy IPAs. The IPA was our ubiquitous style, the ‘cheeseburger’ of craft culture. Entire cities (San Diego) built their beer culture around worship of mighty Northwest hops. The issue’s Tasting Panel digs into the not-that-distant but almost-forgotten past to find out how BC’s West Coast IPA scene is faring in today’s era of hazy, sweet and milkshakey brews.

We have plenty of other compelling material for you, including a candid and entertaining look back at their first year of beer and cider festivals from Jeff and Nathaly of Windward Cider. Ted Child rants about an infomercial disguised as a feature film from Anheuser Busch. J. Random and Warren Boyer share some technical insights that will interest any beer fan. This is a pretty deep issue, so dig right in.

Until next round: sláinte! 🍻
As the long, hot (for the most part) days of summer come to a close, it’s comforting to know that there are plenty of great craft beer events on the horizon to get us through the rainy months ahead.

Taking place from Sep 6—7, Great Canadian Beer Festival is technically a late-summer event, but let’s not split hairs! This is the first year it’s being run by the Victoria Beer Society, and they’re promising a number of exciting changes, including a wider roster of amazing breweries from across the country.

The following weekend, Sept 14–15, brings Whistler Village Beer Festival, featuring 70 breweries, over 140 beers and ciders, food, and live music, set against a picturesque mountainous landscape.

The month closes out with Coquitlam Craft Beer Festival on Sept 28. This all-inclusive event showcases 50+ local craft breweries, cideries, and distilleries, including a “quirky brews” cask corner.

October opens with North Shore Craft Beer Week from Oct 4–11, featuring fun events, and special beers from the likes of House of Funk, Beere, Deep Cove, and more.

For the brewers out there, make sure to check out the BC Craft Brewers Conference from Oct 17–18. This annual event brings the BC craft brewing industry together for two days of networking and educational events, along with a trade show and plenty of beer.

Oct 19 brings the 10th annual BC Beer Awards. This year’s brewers challenge involves aged beers to mark their 10-year anniversary. Attendees can also take home a special 17-ounce gold-embossed commemorative glass this year.

The first Saturday of November traditionally brings Winterbrau to Canoe brewpub. This all-inclusive food and drink event is a celebration of fall seasonal brews, with a warm, inviting atmosphere, and live music.

On the first weekend of December, it’s time to don your ugly sweaters and head down to Save-On-Foods Memorial Centre in Victoria for the Christmas Craft Beer Show. This holiday event features seasonal beers, comfort foods, and a live band.

For links and info for these events and many more, see our events calendar at whatsbrewing.ca/calendar.
On Sunday June 16th 2019, Alexander John Mitchell passed away at age 89. Before that happened, a plan was underway to celebrate his 90th birthday in August, which he missed by only a couple of months.

During Spring 2019, when it became clear that his good health was at risk, John had made arrangements for What’s Brewing to capture a final message to the BC craft beer industry. John subscribed to What’s Brewing and was a kind supporter of the magazine.

On July 14th 2019, What’s Brewing paid tribute by arranging a Celebration Of Life event in partnership with Vancouver’s Red Racer Taphouse, MCd by Mitchell’s good friend John Ohler.

Despite the summer vacation timing, a full complement of friends, family and industry from around BC attended a day of stories, toasts and learning about John. A stunning set of historic printed panels was on display around the brewpub while an extensive photo slideshow played on all screens. A number of BC brewing community leaders raised a toast and paid their respects to John.

The gathering raised close to $1500 for the John Mitchell Scholarship Fund to benefit brewing students at Langley’s Kwantlen Polytechnic University Brewing & Brewery Operations program, with an additional kind donation pledged from Red Racer’s Cask Fest on August 11th. Many thanks to Central City Brewing for their generosity.

Perhaps inspired by our call for donations, Spinnakers Brewhub’s Paul Hadfield and wife Mary Jameson made the trip to Langley in late August, in order to make a special donation to KPU. The $10,000 they’ve contributed formally kicks off a new scholarship in John’s name (see p.5).

What’s Brewing has a store of photos, audio and video clips captured both at the event and while with John Mitchell in recent years. John was an opinionated, unrepentant and fascinating personality whose words were well worth documenting. Expect to see more shared online in the coming days on a Facebook page called Friends of John Mitchell. You can also share your own thoughts and memories at facebook.com/johnmitchellbrewer
Tuesday, October 15th
7:00 – 9:00 PM
Legacy Liquor Store,
1633 Manitoba Street
Cost: $15 (tax incl)

It's always a special occasion when the group of beer reviewers known as the What’s Brewing Tasting Panel get together to present an evening of celebrating and learning about BC craft beer at the Harvest Long Table in Vancouver’s Legacy Liquor Store.

Join the Panel and taste along through a set of five BC beers as we reveal our “secret sauce” in-house method for reviewing beers.

Those who have attended before know that this is an evening of fun because all beers are served out “blind tasting” style. Guests get to debate the style of each beer served as we progress from lighter fare to heavier.

Bonus points if you can guess the actual BC beer in your glass!

Admission includes: five beer samples, custom beer rating sheets, access to our private online rating form, a take-home goodie bag and a talkative and knowledgeable panel of writers, podcasters and brewers.

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The Death of
THE GROWLER
...and my part in its downfall

>> ADAM CHATBURN

I remember the first growler I ever bought. It was from Steamworks Brewpub, after a friend’s stag ten years ago. I was feeling quite refreshed and we were about to board the SeaBus to continue the party at the late, lamented Lynnwood (those who remember just shuddered). I had seen a sign about growlers in the brew pub and, being a newish arrival in Canada, I asked for more information. “It’s a glass jug that you can take beer away in.” I might have cried with joy when presented with my first! Filled with their classic Nut Brown Ale, it was the perfect way to ensure my fellow staggerers stayed hydrated on the long boat ride across Vancouver harbour. My love affair with the growler began that day. There were only about three places in the city that filled growlers at that time, but that soon changed when Parallel 49 opened their tasting room and changed the growler game forever.

Around the same time, I helped launch a CAMRA BC campaign to remove the tax and deposit charges on growlers, successfully having fills redefined as a draft sale, rather than a packaged sale. Shortly after that, when we realized some breweries had a policy of only filling their own branded growlers, CAMRA BC encouraged them to fill any growler and one by one the holdouts agreed. I still wonder what would have happened if we hadn’t pushed for that in the early days of the growler revolution—can you imagine having to take the right branded growler to each brewery?

As President of CAMRA Vancouver, I met with the sainted Ken Beattie from the BC Craft Brewers Guild every few months. One thing that we did (and still do) disagree on was the guild’s refusal to allow liquor stores and bars to fill growlers. As I wrote in 2014, CAMRA BC members felt that consumers should have the option of filling outside of the brewery. It seems to work fine in Washington, Oregon and Alberta. Recommendation #68 of the 2013-14 ‘Yap Report’ government liquor review was to “Allow private and public retail liquor stores to sell growlers and operate refilling stations.” The guild’s rationale for opposing this—“we can’t guarantee the quality”—sounds as unconvincing now as it did then. The subtext was clearly “we don’t want to give up our monopoly.” I argued that encouraging the wider community (not just beer nerds) to adopt growlers was good for consumers, the industry, and the environment.

After ten years as a key part of the craft beer revolution, growler sales have nosedived in many BC breweries. New breweries (and some which are renovating) are skipping growler-fill bars and going with a simple hose from a tap, if needed. I know I’ve been using my growlers less and less; when was the last time you filled one?

The main change in the culture seems to be the advance of craft in cans. With the growth of mobile canning units and quick-canning ‘crowlers’, it’s easier than ever to grab a few tallboys and head out to explore BC. But there’s more to this mystery than that. Perhaps the gradual shift from tasting rooms towards lounges and restaurants has impacted sales. Personally, I wonder if growlers are dying because they didn’t get that broader acceptance in the wider community and culture. Growler sales are still strong in Washington and Oregon and they are actually increasing year on year in Alberta.

So it seems to just be here in BC that growlers are tanking. The evidence is circumstantial, but perhaps if the guild and its members had embraced the idea of outside growler sales, our love affair with them might have lasted.

On a recent walk around my neighbourhood with my dog, Pip, I saw six growlers in a glass-recycling tub. That summed up the situation in a poignant way.

Perhaps you fill your growlers regularly (in areas outside of the Lower Mainland your experience may vary). Thank you for keeping them alive a little bit longer! If you haven’t had a fill lately, keep a couple of growlers in the car so you have them on hand when you need them. Otherwise, we run the risk of these BC icons going the way of the dodo.

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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Naming a brewery can be surprisingly difficult. There is a multitude of things to consider, and it seems like all the good names are taken. Early in the start-up phase, founders have high expectations of the brand they’re trying to create, but little more than a name (and maybe a few test batches) to tie all their expectations to. It can feel like getting the name just right can mean the success of your brewery, and getting it wrong could cause your brewery to fail.

A poor or mediocre name can cause setbacks, but it almost certainly won’t be the reason behind a brewery’s demise. Brands take on lives of their own once they launch and begin to evolve. In the craft beer industry, this evolution can happen quite quickly. Sometimes breweries even evolve to where their name becomes almost irrelevant to their brand and its success. For example, Twin Sails and Bowen Island are both nautical names. Twin Sails’ brand doesn’t have much to do with anything nautical these days, whereas Bowen Island has leaned into the nautical/coastal theme.

So how do you distill all the messages that you want to communicate down into just a couple of catchy, memorable words for your brewery name? As previously mentioned, there are a lot of considerations. What kind of story are you trying to tell? How do you want your brewery to be perceived? How will your naming decision affect your marketing down the road? How will you be able to spin it? What kind of audience are you going after and how will your name resonate with that demographic? Satisfying all of these considerations can take a lot of work and time.

Eight Qualities of a Great Brewery Name

What’s the most you can hope for out of a truly exceptional name? Here are eight points to consider.

1. **Meaningful**: communicates the essence of your brand, supports the image you want to convey
2. **Distinctive**: unique; easy to remember, spell, pronounce; differentiated from your competitors
3. **Scalable**: accommodates change in the structure or focus of the brewery; facilitates easy building of brand extensions
4. **Protectable**: can be owned and trademarked; the domain name and social media handles are available
5. **Visual**: well-suited to graphic presentation (logo, packaging design, etc.)
6. **Persuasive**: encourages customers to emotionally engage with your brand
7. **Emotional**: evokes an emotional response from your customers
8. **Findable**: should be easily searchable

It’s rare that any one name has all eight qualities. Keep these in mind as you read through the name categories on the next page.

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A Cautionary Tale: from one who’s been there

Naming our brewery was an excruciatingly painful process. We took a year and still hadn’t found a name that stuck. So, the five owners went to our hop farm for the weekend with the sole purpose of coming back with a name. We returned with a name we all agreed on, but soon realized it was also no good.

A few months later, I had an epiphany and the name “Backcountry” came to me and I knew it would work. I quickly snagged the website address and brought it to the team… and they rejected it! Finally, they agreed. So start right away as it may take a year or more to find your name!

— Ben Reeder, Co-founder, Backcountry Brewing
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Categories of Names

A common way to make a brand stand out from its competitors is to aim for the “white space” (see graph below). Whether it’s naming, branding, packaging design, or any other aspect of your brewery’s marketing, it’s important to know what the competitive landscape looks like. Then, if you want to zig when everyone else zags, it will be an educated decision. Among the names of BC’s 200+ breweries, some categories of names are heavily used and others are relatively untouched. In completely unscientific fashion, here are the categories of brewery names we’ve observed and how frequently they’ve been used:

Many brewery names fit into multiple categories here. Yellow Dog falls into Colours, Animals, and Dogs. (Dogs exists as its own category separate from Animals because there are 7 “Dog” breweries in BC, which seems high. We love dogs, but it’ll be difficult for a new BC brewery to stand out if they use “Dog” in their name.)

Some names might belong more in one category than another, but we think they still deserve to be listed in multiple categories. Names with “Island” in them have been included in the Coastal category. Names with “Mountain” in them have been included in The Great Outdoors. And the name Vancouver Island Brewing Co. has been placed in Geographic Reference, Place Names, Region Names, and Coastal References because it makes sense in all four categories.

And there are more categories of names that we could have added. What about a category for Water? How about Sound? Fire? Time? What about Goofy vs. Serious? or Literal vs. Figurative? It becomes a bit of a rabbit hole. At some point you just have to put down the laptop and call it a day.

For a discussion and examination of some of the more popular and interesting naming categories in table form, see the Analysis of Name Categories section in the online version of this article.

Descriptive Elements

You’ll note that the filterable list has a second set of filters for Descriptive Elements. That’s the second part of each brewery’s name, the one that describes the nature of the business.

Unlike in the categorization of Distinctive Elements, breweries can only fall into one category of Descriptive Elements, which makes a good old pie chart the best way to display the data.

You can see that Brewing (or Brewing Company) is the overwhelming favourite in the BC market. That might indicate some possibility for space in the other categories. For example, some of the less-used Descriptive Elements such as “Ale” could be used to help (savvy) customers know what kind of beers to expect just from the name. But using any of the less-popular Descriptive Elements can hinder your findability. When looking for you online, your customers are most likely going to search for “[DISTINCTIVE ELEMENT] + BREWERY/BREWING”. You might as well be there to be found.

The addition of “Company” to the Descriptive Elements is interesting, as it’s not something that’s used in many other industries these days. It has a bit of a retro feel to it, and we believe it’s used to accentuate the idea of craftsmanship. Some customers may consider it a bit “hipster.”

Overall, we don’t recommend spending too much time or effort on the Descriptive Element portion of your brewery’s name. It’s not the part of your name that most of your customers will remember anyway.

Don’t forget to consider how your name sounds out loud. For example, Moody Ales sounds a lot better than Moody Brewery. While some names might look good on paper, they can be a mouthful when spoken aloud.

With branding challenges as difficult as naming, it’s important to be clear about what you’re trying to achieve. Any name for a new brewery should be researched, tested, and, ultimately, the process guided by a professional who can employ a creative, disciplined, and strategic approach. If you’ve already started to wrestle with this and would like some help with this work, contact Hired Guns Creative at hiredgunscreative.com.

This article was excerpted from How To Name Your Brewery by Leif Miltenberger for Hired Guns Creative.

Scan this QR code to view the full story and interactive BC brewery list, or find the article at hiredgunscreative.com/blog

Leif Miltenberger is a Managing Partner at Hired Guns Creative, a small but mighty design agency focused on providing branding and packaging design for craft breweries. Hired Guns has provided award-winning design to the beverage alcohol sector since 2008.
Summer festival season is in full swing as we write this, and our little company Windfall Cider now has one full year of beer and cider events under its belt. From panicked purchases of festival equipment to interesting encounters with patrons, it’s been a nutty but all-round solid learning experience for us.

Flash back to May 1, 2018 when Windfall’s first production of cider was being packaged into kegs and cans. Our can production wasn’t without hiccups. The company that printed our sleeves had messed up big time: colours weren’t right and sizing wasn’t to spec, so at the last minute we just had to can without sleeves. There was a lot of stress and we were on a tight deadline. After our first fermentation period, five months long, our inaugural event was to be last year’s BC Cider Fest, at that point only four days away. The most important thing was to get that cider kegged in time. Two days before the event we packed five kegs into our Jeep and took them home for safekeeping.

We knew what a jockey box was—those nifty portable coolers set up behind the banners that chill and dispense your favourite beverage. And thanks to Chris at Dan’s Homebrewing for setting us up with one on super-short notice. Having attended many beer festivals in the past as Joe Public, I just didn’t know what goes into setting things up as an exhibitor. We arrived for set up early. We were nervous. The two 5-pound CO$_2$ cylinders that we brought seemed like enough until the other cider makers started arriving with their 10-pound numbers.

Confidence shot and nervous energy abounding, we proceeded to set up. I had set it all up and tested it out at home but this time there were a few things missing. Where did all of those washers go? And why didn’t any of the exhibitors have any extra washers? We had to MacGyver a couple of washers from some plastic tubing that we found at the festival and it worked when set up. Fingers crossed. Confidence high(er) again. Gas turned on and tested. What was the right PSI for dispensing? Again, no one seemed to know. Turns out ten is supposed to be just about right but it never seems right to me. Sometimes the gas pressure runs up too high, other times too low. Maddening. But once the guests started coming in, we had other things to think about.

Festivals are always about you, the consumer. We want to meet you and you want to meet us, ask questions, and get to know something new. But I haven’t been to a festival yet that wasn’t crazy busy. It seriously limits the amount of time with each guest. As much as we’d like to explain our cool up-and-coming products, it simply isn’t possible. It always ends up as: “this is our dry, this is our rosé, and this is our latest small batch. Which do you want? OK, here you go. NEXT!”

All in all, working the festivals has been a great experience. We’ve been able to chat about our product, met some genuinely interested consumers, and above all, gotten to know many of the terrific people that devote their lives to our burgeoning craft beverage industry here in BC. We’ve met some amazing people so far. Thanks for having us out!
COLOURFUL CHARACTERS

Over time we’ve learned to watch for these amusing personalities we run into at almost every event. We’ve probably all been one of these at some point.

THE OLD SCHOOLER. Like the nice lady who turned sour when she found out our apple cider wasn’t sweet. She showed genuine interest, asking several questions before narrowing her decision down to a particular pour—but upon tasting, developed a telltale scowl. “You’ve done something wrong here!” she informed us. Turns out she was more of a Growers type than a craft cider type. Like an Old Milwaukee drinker at an IPA festival: what can you do?

THE GUSHER. “Oh my gosh, I love your cider! Can I have a bigger pour?”

THE RATIO PLAYER. These people just wanna have fun. They spot the biggest alcohol by volume (ABV) and keep coming back. It’s like the game of “ratio” from my times at a local craft beer bar with many, many taps: a beer costing $7 and having an ABV of 7% has a ratio of 1:1. Anything below 1:1 is poor value; anything above is dangerous and yet coveted. The same math goes on at festivals. You notice people returning for your strongest pour over and over again. Maybe it’s because that one is your best, but perhaps there’s another motive?

THE LAST CALLER. The staff move about the room announcing, “last call in 15 minutes.” Like a bloodhound on the hunt, this last pour chaser quickly sniffs out the vendors who are slow in closing up. Look around at your next festival once most of the taps are removed. Who’s in the biggest line-up? We’ve been caught a couple of times ourselves, but you learn fast because you don’t want to run afoul of the festival organizers. Pay attention to your watch, remove the tap, and say sorry to those you turn away.}

JEFF NAIRN

is the co-founder of Windfall Cider, a craft cider producer based in East Vancouver. His column tackles items fermented, not brewed, focusing on issues related to BC’s burgeoning craft cider industry.

TOD CREEK

Craft Cider

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The progress of craft beer drives headlines around North America, with boasts of double-digit volume growth quarter by quarter. Over the past decade, craft beer went from being on the fringes of society to being a mainstream aspect of daily life. Akin to the coffee shop in today’s culture, the local brewery is a watering hole that services the neighborhood. British Columbia is a leader in the Canadian craft beer scene, and BC consumers have fully embraced the craft beer train. With nearly 30% of market, BC’s craft share is one of the strongest in North America. The amount of craft beer and the number of breweries operating in British Columbia has absolutely exploded in recent years.

In a beer market that is shrinking overall, micro breweries (production < 15,000 HL) have averaged an increase of 21% by volume per year since 2015. Regional breweries (production between 15,000 HL and 300,000 HL) have increased their total annual volume by an average of 6% per year in the same period. Combined, that’s an increase of more than 200,000 HL of craft beer sold in BC per year.

In the same period, since 2015, the number of operating breweries has doubled, from an estimated 86 operating breweries in 2015 to an astounding 172 as of March 31, 2019 (BCLDB 2018/2019 year end). This has created areas like Port Moody, East Vancouver, Penticton and North Vancouver where as many as 10+ breweries may be located within range of a long walk.

The only thing that is growing faster than the amount of craft beer being consumed is the number of breweries operating. In the most recent annual BC Craft Beer Survey, Beer Me BC reported increased price sensitivity and decreased importance of brewery and location. This shift may be small but likely stems from the overwhelming number of options available.

Looking at the beer industry as a whole in British Columbia (not just craft), the picture shifts slightly. The overall beer market is shrinking in low single-digit percentages and a chunk of that market is moving from the macro producer to the craft producer. This shift has largely been celebrated by craft beer fans and has been positioned as a business model that builds jobs and has a strong impact on local communities. Small businesses have been nipping at the heels of large corporations to build a new, community-focused beer model. The overall shrinking of the market has been masked for craft producers, who are taking a larger piece of the pie.

It turns out that, plotting the total craft beer brewed over the number of breweries operating, the average production per brewery has been in constant decline since at least 2015. Based on all craft breweries, the average has decreased by nearly 2,000 HL. Coming down from over 6,000 HL to just over 4,000 HL represents a 31% decrease in average volume.
This decrease doesn’t represent the demise of craft beer in BC. It doesn’t mean that existing and proposed breweries are doomed to fail. What it does mean is that the industry is getting crowded and breweries need to focus on driving value in their local communities. So, with that said, get outside and support your local craft brewery!

Data presented are based on BCLDB Quarterly Market Reports of beer volume sold through the wholesale channel. This is measured based on packaged goods sales and excludes draft volume.

Beer Category Sales, 15 Mo. Apr 2018 - Jun 2019
Fiscal calendar begins April 1st

Dustan Sept is the founder of the award-winning website Beer Me BC, BC’s #1 resource for craft beer reviews, BC beer industry insights and careers. Dustan is also Marketing Director at Central City Brewers & Distillers.
Kepler the cat has no appreciation for astronomy, one would imagine. He has no idea who his namesake is, nor does he ponder why his owners felt that a classical-era German astronomer should be paid homage through the moniker of a family pet. He is likely not aware that Johannes Kepler, dead since 1630, also lent his name to a NASA telescope and a European cargo spacecraft. Most disappointingly, Kepler cannot possibly grasp the fact that he almost shared that same name with Coquitlam's only craft brewery.

Kepler Brewing doesn’t exist, but the project which almost adopted that name is alive and well. It was eventually birthed to the world as Mariner Brewing Company in late August 2017, and subsequently celebrated its second anniversary shortly before this magazine went to print. It’s the brainchild of Kepler’s dad, Byron Vallis, whose passion for homebrewing led him to leave a comfortable government career and apply his scientific mind to a daunting business endeavour.

A LABOUR OF LOVERS

“Lauren and I are both sort of science geeks, but I am the bigger geek for sure,” shares Vallis, who turned 28 around the time this magazine was released. Asked if her future husband is indeed a geek, Byron’s fiancée Lauren Ang hesitates, then agrees. “We went through a very serious Star Trek phase,” relates Ang, two months Vallis’ junior. “Star Trek definitely impacted my life,” Byron openly admits. “The search for knowledge is innately human in my mind.”

Vallis then partially explains the astronomy reference: “When we named our cat [now five years old] I was going to University and studying science.” Not space science, mind you, “mostly biology, which has been helpful in brewing.”

As with a substantial proportion of the industry’s newer entrepreneurial population, Vallis didn’t originally set out to brew beer for a living. But when he heard the call and knew clearly a brewery was in their future, the couple began searching for a name that reflected exploration and charting a course.

The Kepler space probe made its way onto the shortlist. “It essentially points itself at a part of space and looks for new planets,” notes Vallis. Probably to everyone’s benefit, the name was discarded once it was discovered that an old Irish cidery had a similar brand.

Mariner also made the list, and it ticked a few boxes. “The name was less about the word Mariner and more about what a Mariner does,” commented Vallis, referring to navigation and exploration. The word itself has a couple of other convenient meanings: it refers to a program of 10 space probes that pre-date the Voyager program, and it’s the name of a prominent street in Coquitlam, not far from the brewery and from where Byron hails.

Mariner Way runs right by Mundy Park, close to Dr. Charles Best, the well-known secondary school where Byron got to know Lauren back in Grade 10. They became romantic after graduation, at the tender age of 18. With nine years as partners, they’re really an old married couple, despite the fact that they won’t be making it official until July 18th, 2020. At that point, they’ll have a decade of pre-marital experience to lean on.

By the time marriage made the radar, Mariner Brewing was well underway as a going concern. With so much to deal with, they set a two-year engagement in 2018. But that first year flew by. Not that nothing has been accomplished; they’ve chosen the venue, caterer, photographer and the dress. That’s not bad. Lauren’s got her wedding party selected, but Byron hasn’t really been focused on all that.
“If I’m honest,” he opines, “managing a release schedule of a new beer a month is a lot more complicated than planning a wedding.” He describes “the complexities of running a small manufacturing facility” as taking more share of mind for him than nuptials. [We try to avoid gender stereotypes here at What’s Brewing, but Byron’s not helping.]

“It’s going to be a fun party. But we’re both pretty chill about it, I would say,” Lauren chimed in. “We’re not very formal people,” added future hubby. “Slogging kegs around at beer events has taught us that things don’t have to be formal to be enjoyable. We’re both pretty humble.” Reflecting a Millennial sensibility, bride-to-be Lauren doesn’t see the wedding as necessarily the ‘most important day of my life’. “Hopefully not,” she says forthrightly. “I’m very excited for it, but hopefully we do other things that are more impactful.”

‘Wow’, thinks the author, becoming less and less surprised as to what these newcomers have accomplished in their young beer business.

TO BOLDLY GO
“In my family, it’s always been really important to make food and share food with people,” Byron Vallis recalls when thinking about his earliest influences around hospitality. “I learned the importance of sharing food & conversation; how that can bring people together.”

Growing up in the suburbs shaped Vallis’ experiences in that vein. “After my group of friends turned 19, we found ourselves saying, ‘Let’s go get some cool food and drink. I like trying different beers. Well, I guess we have to go into Vancouver, was the inevitable reality, Byron recalls. He and his friends would find good beer at places like Tap & Barrel and CRAFT Beer Market. Standout breweries like Four Winds and Steel & Oak were opening in the suburbs around this time.

The idea of brewing beer germinated in the young craft fan to the point that it became a sideline pastime. “I think there was a two-year period when you guys didn’t go out anymore; you just brewed at home,” Lauren pointed out. “It was before [Port Moody’s] Brewers Row was a thing.”

Vallis confirms: “When Yellow Dog and Moody Ales opened, it really struck me: instead of putting the cool new thing in the city, you can really make the suburbs a lot more liveable by having these community hubs. It was close to home, but not as close as I felt it should be.”

“We have been surprised that nobody has gone ahead and opened another brewery in Coquitlam,” Vallis continues. “But at the same time, three or four have opened in Port Coquitlam” which, with newer commercial construction, has seen a recent brewery boom.

To be fair, there was a brewpub in Coquitlam back in the 90s. Coquitlam Brewing Company, in Henderson Mall near to Coquitlam Centre, folded alongside many a brewery at the end of the “first wave” of craft. Sixteen years passed before microbrewing would return to Coquitlam.

Lauren mentions that the biggest impediment has been real estate. “There were a few other breweries that were looking to open in Coquitlam, but they moved on,” she relates. Byron points out that zoning is at the core of that issue. “When we were looking through many square kilometres of commercial space [in Coquitlam], we found only three suitable buildings.”

Back in 2016, What’s Brewing ran a story on the new Port Moody row, in which our reporter Mallory O’Neil reached out to Coquitlam City Councillor Craig Hodge to get an explanation as to why BC’s sixth largest city, with four times the population and area of Port Moody, had nothing to show after all these years of craft beer’s popularity. As Hodge told us at the time, “Cities determine land use via zoning, so that has been central to the discussion of craft breweries in Coquitlam.”

Coquitlam council, having witnessed both neighbouring Tri-Cities become exponents of the craft wave and having seen its first new brewery become a hub, certainly recognizes the value at this point. “The City is definitely on board,” Byron confirms.

Of the Coquitlam hospitality scene in general, Vallis says, “It wasn’t until bubble tea and sushi started popping up that people would go out of their way to meet their friends and try something new. It’s really in the last two to four years that there’s been a resurgence in owner-operators trying to do something unique.”

Vallis and Mariner certainly fall into that category. But it’s been quite a jump from looking for beer with friends to supplying it to the community. Before that happened, Byron learned to homebrew and refined his craft while living with Lauren and her mother Sandy, fermenting his batches in their cloakroom. It took some time before his concoctions were ready to come out of the not-so-proverbial closet and become the foundation of a commercial enterprise.

Before jumping into the fray, Vallis conducted his own market research. “Having a background in science, I took a pretty data-driven approach,” he says. “One of the first things I did was spend a bunch of time at Yellow Dog counting people.” He asked himself, “How much beer do they sell out the front? What portion is growlers vs. glasses on site? How does that affect the business?”

Byron continues, “People say a lot about the camaraderie within the industry, but it still surprised me how encouraging they were.” Twin Sails Brewing was really helpful, Lauren shares. “Cody and Clay [Allmin] were fantastic,” Vallis agrees. “The whole Row was very supportive. Everyone knew Coquitlam would get a brewery at some point.”

Now Byron needed the right partners. Fortunately, as early as 2013, the biology student was working at an Art Knapp’s location under the tutelage of owner Wim Vander Zalm (son of a certain famous garden-owning former BC Premier; businessman and plant expert in his own right). When Vallis started making serious conversation about opening a brewery, Vander Zalm was listening and became an investor in Mariner. The search was on for a location, and they found one within a short walk from what became Coquitlam Station.

Continued on page 22
The [Evergreen Extension] Skytrain was half under construction at that point,” recalls Vallis. “I knew the city was going to grow.” He mentions the community plan involves densification, which will make the area more urban over time. “They’re going to be building ten towers just down the street in the next five to ten years,” Lauren adds.

Still, it’s a scary proposition for a young couple to open a business as costly as a brewery. Vallis shares, “I’ve heard it said that it takes a really big ego to open a brewery. In hindsight, I’d say that’s true. I’m going to make some damn good beer, and it’s going to be great.”

In 2017, he heard that a new brewery was anticipated keenly enough that he was invited to apply for the head brewer position, he decided originally I was going to be Tap Room Manager – for at least the first year. He began studies in the Brew Lab’s Brewing program. Jeff Bressette is originally from Ontario. He studied sports psychology in New Brunswick, where he discovered craft beer drinking local Picaroons Traditional Ales. He arrived in BC three years ago, thirsty for knowledge that would help him break into the craft beer industry. So, he Googled “brewing school” and Kwantlen Polytechnic University’s Brewing & Brewery Operations program came up. He began studies in the Brew Lab’s fourth- ever class.

In 2018, he took a summer job at mobile operator West Coast Canning and found himself working shifts canning batches of beer, occasionally at Mariner. Later on, a KPU classmate introduced him to Mariner’s owner Byron Vallis, who was looking to hire a brewer to work under Kevin.

For the first year, the brewing was all me, but now Jeff is full time,” shares Wilson. “The business is successful enough that now, just being Head Brewer is what I need to do.”

“One thing we’ve been doing since inception is an Exploratory Batch program, with one-offs every Thursday,” Kevin explains. They release a new 100 litre batch each week. “By the end of the first year, I felt like I was scrapping the bottom of the ideas barrel. Jeff is now leading that program.”

THE NEXT GENERATION

Jeff Bressette is originally from Ontario. He studied sports psychology in New Brunswick, where he discovered craft beer drinking local Picaroons Traditional Ales. He arrived in BC three years ago, thirsty for knowledge that would help him break into the craft beer industry. So, he Googled “brewing school” and Kwantlen Polytechnic University’s Brewing & Brewery Operations program came up. He began studies in the Brew Lab’s fourth- ever class.

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Out front of their proud creation

With a plan, funding and a location settled, Mariner was shaping up. But even the most confident homebrewer can’t create a large commercial brewery on their own. Mariner’s first key hire would be a Head Brewer to help make Byron’s brews come to life on a larger scale.

MAKING IT SO

Kevin Wilson has been brewing commercially for over a decade. Originally a self-taught homebrewer, he joined the Vancouver Homebrewers Association (Vanbrewers) around 2008-09 and participated keenly enough that he was invited to judge at a few events.

In 2017, he heard that a new brewery was opening in the Tri-Cities. Interested in applying for the head brewer position, he found himself at an interview hosted in an office tower boardroom by Lauren’s father Roy. “They grilled me with all these serious questions,” he recalls. “But I got a good impression from them.” Byron was apparently also impressed, because Kevin started with Mariner in late spring 2017, while the brewery was being built.

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“The first thing we did was hung out and played Star Trek Catan,” Wilson shares, underscoring the geeky side of the brewery’s management team. But eventually he realized “they were a lot more cool than they seemed at first.”

The process allowed the core team to gel. For Ang, it reinforced her commitment to the business. “For the first year, the brewing was all me, but now Jeff is full time,” shares Wilson. “The business is successful enough that now, just being Head Brewer is what I need to do.”

“In the end, it’s going to be great.’ ”

“I’m going to make some damn good beer, and it’s going to be great.”

Now, she says, “I can’t see moving on from Mariner. I think as we grow, and our business gets more established, my role will probably change. But I can’t imagine not being involved, in at least some way.”

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“One thing we’ve been doing since inception is an Exploratory Batch program, with one-offs every Thursday,” Kevin explains. They release a new 100 litre batch each week. “By the end of the first year, I felt like I was scrapping the bottom of the ideas barrel. Jeff is now leading that program.”
Bressette chips in, “For the one we’re doing tomorrow, I went to a grocery store and wandered around until I found something that could work.” But the search wasn’t totally random. “KPU drilled into you that everything you do is done for a reason,” he points out. “Like, when you’re picking ingredients, you’re doing it with the final flavour in mind.” He ended up with a bundle of Borage, which is a blue starflower that “tastes kind of like cucumbers.”

“We have people that come in every Thursday to try it,” Ang notes. Vallis adds, “We learn a ton about ingredients, about scaling, and people’s preferences” through this series. “Trying not to fail was a big motivator in the beginning, but the experimentation is working better for us than trying to play it safe,” Wilson concludes.

For example, the colourful beer prominently featured on this magazine’s cover is Venture Blueberry Sour, which started as an Exploratory Batch beer [see Beer Me BC review]. “It’s probably our most popular beer this summer,” says Kevin. “Our Strawberry Berliner Weiss is super popular, and everyone is excited about our Lemon Slice Sour.” This reporter can vouch for the tastiness of these brews.

Asked who comes up with the beer ideas, Wilson notes that Mariner’s recipe development is very collaborative amongst the brew team. People in the taproom, and even some regular customers, give their feedback as well. So far, it’s paying off.

STEERING THE ENTERPRISE

As a BC craft beer fan, you’ve probably seen Mariner’s products at retail. Considering their modest tenure, they’ve done really well at getting their products on liquor store shelves. Vallis points out that their sales team has combined four or five decades of beverage alcohol sales experience. But more than that, there’s been some serious elbow grease by the owners as well.

“For the first year and a half, I did farmers’ markets every week,” Lauren points out. “We’re the only brewery that’s consistently been at the Coquitlam and Port Moody markets. You have to get up at 7am on a Sunday to pack the van and be there. In the winter, when it’s minus three out and nobody wants to drink beer,” they follow through anyway, she says.

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“Sometimes people think Mariner is bigger than it is. Byron notes that friends occasionally mention, “You’ve grown so much; you’re everywhere!” They try to temper such thoughts. “We’re a very small family business,” Ang reinforces. “For the last year, it was just Byron, me (former team member) Val in the office. Three of our investors are biologically related to us.”

Despite their modest status, they’ve already begun giving back to the community. Ang explains, “We do a number of charity events, but the two we focus on are the Coquitlam Firefighter’s Charity and the Coquitlam Animal Shelter,” she adds. The latter receiving partial proceeds from their Homeward Bound Pale Ale for instance.

The brewery itself has grown a patio out front, as well as another dog-friendly one out back that’s called the ‘beer garden’. Kids are welcome throughout the facility until 8pm. Food options have increased as well, with pizza-like flatbreads joining the menu in the past year.

As for work/life balance, he notes, “We’re trying to build more structure around things. We’re big on checklists.” They’re gaining a little more balance, and they’ve got their workday down close to eight hours. “I feel like we’re just emerging from the cave,” Vallis admits.

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At the moment, that kind of growth is not the focus. This group of explorers needs to venture farther on their journey of beer discovery first. But with the earnest modesty of this group, there’s no danger of losing sight of that.
A year ago, for the first time, our Panel reviewed IPAs—but we had trouble finding any that weren’t of the “new school.” This time we made it a point to review the two venerable stalwarts that brought highly hoppy beer into BC’s mainstream a decade ago, while including some more recent examples from relative newcomers.

**WHO’S ON BOARD**
The beers evaluated this round included:

1. 33 Acres of Nirvana  
   ABV: 7.0%  
   IBU: 70
2. Central City Red Racer IPA  
   ABV: 6.5%  
   IBU: 80
3. Driftwood Fat Tug  
   ABV: 7.0%  
   IBU: 80
4. Lightheart West Coast IPA  
   ABV: 6.8%  
   IBU: 76
5. Main Street Naked Fox  
   ABV: 6.8%  
   IBU: 55
6. Parkside Humans IPA  
   ABV: 6.3%  
   IBU: 30

There was a time when you could see through an IPA. Then in 2016, Steamworks Brewing and its head brewer Julia Hanlon took “Best In Show” at the BC Beer Awards for Flagship IPA, the first successful BC example of a style called “New England IPA”, and it became a rage. We awarded Julia “Brewer of the Year” in our end-of-year recap for opening a new door. We didn’t know it was a Pandora’s box.

The beers of this new style were hazy; not just unfiltered but thick and pulpy. They had hops but didn’t seem bitter; they were sweet and juicy. Soon it would become impossible to find a new IPA release that was not Hazy or Milkshake. The formerly proud West Coast IPA lay in wait, pining for the day a hoppy backlash would restore it to its rightful throne.
Lundy "The Legend" Dale: Founder, Pink Pints Vancouver, CAMRA Vancouver, long-time beer reviewer for TAPS and Beer Me BC, first female Western Canadian Cicerone, etc. etc.

Warren Boyer: BJCP Certified award-winning home and commercial brewer, and past President of CAMRA Vancouver

Julia Hanlon: Head Brewer, Steamworks Brewing Co.

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

ABOUT OUR PROCESS

Our unsanctioned competition uses a custom 30-point weighted rating scale based loosely on the BJCP Scoresheet. In contrast with a simple 5-star rating, panelists evaluate specifics like flavour, balance and overall impression before scoring.

We use a five-person panel to help reduce the influence of personal bias and bad product samples. Panelists may opt to review ‘blind’ (indicated above/in scores where applicable).

AND THE WINNER IS:

33 Acres of Nirvana takes our blue ribbon for being fresh and interesting but staying close to the West Coast IPA style. The brew is a return to days of yore, when North American IPA broke away from its English ancestor by using bold, fruity, floral and piney Northwest hops, and ramping up the IBUs.

All beers scored at least 20 points this round, which is a very solid showing.

SCORE BREAKDOWN

Panel scores include these five categories. For a full list of individual scores, turn to next page.

ENJOYMENT

CLARITY

BALANCE: MALT VS. HOP

DRINKABILITY

A general overview of how these beers did as a group. Pie chart tip: start at top of legend and work clockwise from 45 degree mark (3 o’clock)
WB SPRING TASTING PANEL RESULTS. MAXIMUM SCORE = 30

33 ACRES OF NIRVANA 25.0/30

A very well balanced IPA that is very drinkable at 7%

Skews slightly hoppy from balanced. Citrus flavours without being too bitter. Delicious.

Blind tasting: Good example of a NW IPA, a more complex hop aroma that was both piney, citrusy and floral, but a good balance with no one note dominating too much.

Crisp, bitter, piney, and grapefruity, this beer had all the key components of a great West Coast IPA.

33 acres of Nirvana? More like 33 acres of yum town! I would give this beer to anyone that is new to IPAs and wants to start learning about the west coast style.

CENTRAL CITY RED RACER

Hard to believe that it has been a few years since I have had one of the original West Coast IPAs!! This was always my "go to" beer. I used to find it almost too hoppy, and now, not hoppy enough.

Sweet malt balances the citrus zest bitterness with some fruity sweetness. A westcoast classic.

Blind tasting: Quite bitter but a also malty, caramel character. Not to style for a NW IPA.

A true OG of the Westcoast, but just like Snoop Dogg this beer seems different today then it did ten years ago. Amber in colour with a distinct malt flavour this strikes me closer to English IPA than a West Coast offering.

This used to be a staple in my fridge. But with all the development in the industry, and all the other options out there, I almost forgot about it. It's a good example of what a hoppy IPA used to be.

LIGHTHEART WEST COAST IPA 21.6/30

One of the newest breweries to take on the West Coast IPA. Nicely balanced but a tad light in aroma.

Big and balanced. Bitter citrus hops with a sweet malty backbone.

Tasting blind: this beer lacked the the bitterness that I would expect in a NW IPA. Also showing signs of oxidation, which may have swung the balance towards maltiness instead of being hoppy and bitter.

BAM! Flavour Town. While clearly inspired by the West Coast IPA style, this has some hop flavours that are new to the style for me, such as white grape and lychee. While some might criticize the minimal dank, resin bitterness, I can't deny how delicious this beer is.

I don't know if I would call this a West Coast IPA. I got a smooch of earthy hops and a firm handshake of malts. In my opinion, it leans more towards an english style IPA.

MAIN STREET NAKED FOX

Nice blend of aroma hops.

High hop bitterness, very bottom.

A true to style NW IPA. And flavour, but also a bit which makes it less drinkable.

A solid modern West Coast offering. When I go West Coast I really want those bitter-piney-grapefruit rindy flavours which this is just touches on. Wait "Naked" Fox? What does that even mean?

I think this is what I would call a West Coast IPA. I got a smooch of earthy hops and a firm handshake of malts. In my opinion, it leans more towards an english style IPA.

Lundy  Warren  Julia  Carnell  Mike
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<thead>
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<th>PARKSIDE HUMANS IPA</th>
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<td><strong>Aroma</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Flavour</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>6.4/8</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Flavour</strong></td>
<td>7.6/10</td>
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Blind Tasting: Nice balance of bitterness and hop aroma.

Fairly balanced. Citrus and herbal hops.

Tasting this beer blind, I enjoyed it but I found it hard to judge in a NW IPA category—which is to say it was tasty but not to style. Fruity, juicy, hazy, carb seemed lower...definitely a good NE IPA.

As a PoMo local I drink this beer often and enjoy it, but this specific sample left me wanting more. More bitterness, more citrus, more clarity. Even so, if you are looking for something slightly more subdued this is your west coast IPA.

Humans is one of my favourite beers of all time. Its sumptuous, silky smooth body and perfectly balanced flavour profile are so sexy, it’s causing problems in my marriage. Just look at its Silver Medal at the Canadian Brewing Awards. In summary, it’s good.
Red Racer’s Street Legal brand of de-alcoholized craft beer products is the best in its class. Unlike other "near beers", by using state-of-the-art technology to remove the alcohol, the beer’s full flavour is preserved.

De-Alcoholized beer is often derided as flavourless or as a poor substitute for actual beer. With Red Racer’s Street Legal IPA and Pilsner, this view no longer holds true. Here’s why.

Street Legal starts just like every beer brewed by Red Racer at Central City Brewers + Distillers: with water, barley, hops and yeast. Brewing, fermentation, and clarification all occur as normal. Every Street Legal de-alcoholized beer starts off the same as their alcoholic cousins. This is a distinct difference from the arrested fermentation method of producing non-alcoholic beer, which relies on stopping fermentation and using excessive hops and other flavour compounds in an attempt to balance the sweetness of un-fermented wort. All Street Legal de-alcoholized beers fully complete the fermentation process, resulting in a flavour and body consistent with any other beer purchased from the liquor store.

Once Street Legal has completed the fermentation and clarification steps of brewing the alcohol needs to be removed. For this, Central City relies on a cross-flow filtration de-alcoholization system that utilizes reverse osmosis.

Cross-flow filtration relies on a stream of water running parallel to a stream of finished beer that is separated by a membrane. This membrane allows only water and alcohol to pass through, drawing alcohol from the beer and into the water stream. Once the alcohol is drawn out, de-oxygenated water is added back to reconstitute the beer and make up for the volume lost from the removal of alcohol. Flavour and body are retained through this process, ensuring the final product is as close to the original beer as possible.

By removing alcohol using this process, the beer is neither heated nor pasteurized as is the case with the vacuum distillation method for removing alcohol. Vacuum distillation relies on heating the beer until the alcohol evaporates. While most of the alcohol is removed using this method, the secondary effect is that the beer is effectively cooked through this process. The result is a beer that tastes off, and produces a cooked taste, as well as an unappealing mouthfeel for the drinker.

Unlike non-alcoholic beers made using arrested fermentation or vacuum distillation, Red Racer’s Street Legal IPA and Pilsner use reverse osmosis to produce beers that are delicious and hard to tell apart from the original, alcoholic versions. Because of this high-tech process, Red Racer Street Legal beers are Canada’s best—and only—craft brewed de-alcoholized beers.

Learn more at centralcitybrewing.com
How far would you go to have a craft beer experience? How about a 12-hour flight traveling more than 10,000 kilometres through 15 time zones?

Let me introduce you to Taiwan, a 394-kilometre-long island that is home to more than 23 million people. This sub-tropical country has had a colourful history and a multitude of invaders, with the Portuguese and Japanese being the most influential. The overwhelming majority of today’s population is Chinese, but there are sixteen recognized indigenous groups.

Besides the spectacular beauty of the rugged coastline, rainforest and high mountains (it is the fourth-tallest island in the world), Taiwan is also deservedly famous for its culinary culture. Food and drink are described as a fusion of Japanese and Chinese, with delicious specialties found in small cafes and night markets. As I found out, it certainly is easy to gain weight in a very short time!

New culinary players recently joined the mix. Although there is no capacity to produce grain or hops on the island, craft beer is becoming increasingly available throughout the land. This became possible when Taiwan joined the World Trade Organization in 2002 and the government was forced to allow private businesses to make beer and spirits. Before 2002, the Taiwan Tobacco and Liquor Corporation made everything, including Taiwan Lager. They make adjunct lagers, in three styles, that have a unique flavour profile from Formosa rice, making them sweeter than similar American mainstream beers.

On a visit in spring 2019, I had the opportunity to meet many of the new players in the craft beer movement in and around Taipei. I was amazed how similar their story is to the early days of craft brewing in North America.

First visit was to Jim and Dad’s Brewery on the outskirts of Yuanshan Township, Yilan county (about an hour outside of Taipei on the northeast coast). This area is renowned for its hot springs, making it a popular weekend getaway for people living in Taipei. Jim Sung produces several styles, including a barrel program, and has twelve taps in his brewpub. He got his start making homebrew and ended up winning a top national award. His father, a chemical engineer, took note that brewing had taken over from computer gaming as his son’s passion. Building a brewery with lots of space for expansion was the result of father-son collaboration. With three full-time brewers, a bottling and cask program, and a full-time chef, Jim is quite comfortable in his development of the business. He encourages his serving staff to become familiar with all the beers on tap so they can answer customers’ questions with first-hand knowledge.

My next visit in the day was to Ka Va Lan Whiskey distillery, a massive company that produces award-winning quality. I had a wonderful opportunity to do a whiskey tasting and then blend my own bottle of whiskey to take home. From there we headed back to Taipei for a delicious dinner.

Continued on page 30
DAY TWO
Originally from France, Cyril Momer of Formosa Brewing got involved in the consumption of craft beer at an early age. His palate gradually matured to appreciating craft beers made by local artisans. We met in a shared taphouse/bottle shop in the heart of Taipei. On the wall behind Cyril, from floor to 12-foot high ceiling, was every imaginable type of bottled craft beer from Europe.

Cyril is easy to talk to, and the hours flew by as endless knowledge and stories about craft beer flowed like an open tap of IPA. Of course, having pints of his famous Mountain Pepper Wheat, or Double IPA helped melt the time. There is a spoonful of humour in his beers, like in the Iron Maiden–themed The Number of The Yeast with a 6.66 ABV. The labels usually involve drawings of Cyril, the brewmaster, and staff enjoying drinking beer.

It was time for dinner. The must-experience food in Taipei can be found in one of many night markets. At the Ningxia Night Market, the specialty is oyster omelet. I have not seen it on any breakfast menu in Vancouver, but it is very sought-after in Taipei with the best venues having line-ups more than half an hour long. So, what is the taste you ask? Definitely oyster—gooey and runny and full of flavour from the sea.

DAY THREE
On we headed to New Taipei, the industrial zone. Breweries are not allowed in Taipei city, so you will only find craft beer bars, beer-themed restaurants, and taphouses. The morning started at Sunmai Brewery, one of the first craft breweries established in Taiwan (2004). The beers I tasted with the head brewer were spot on. Later in the day, I would visit their taphouse to find out more. In the meantime, I headed off to Taihu Taphouse to meet brewmaster Winnie Hsu.

Taihu Brewery is the largest craft brewery in Taiwan at present, with four outlets to enjoy their unique brews in and around Taipei. Winnie started in the industry as a cocktail bartender. Later, while studying in the USA, she was hired as a brewer for a planned American craft beer restaurant franchise in Taiwan. After training in Atlanta and Glendale for six months, she returned home as a brewer. Five years later, she moved on to Sunmai and was sent to Germany for six months to get her Brewmaster’s Certificate. A couple of years later, while taking a break, she discovered a small batch brewery in a local taphouse that made really good beer. Within a year, she had an opportunity to step in as brewmaster at Taihu Brewery. She has never looked back.

Winnie states, “My start as a cocktail bartender has carried through to my beer making. My beers are not the standard you would expect to find. One of my current favorites is a 1% IPA. It has all the characteristics of a true IPA without the alcohol.” Winnie’s first big assignment at Taihu was to make 60 barrels of special beers, all within a year. Their flagship craft beer is Black Bear Bourbon Barrel-Aged Stout (9% ABV, 600 ml). In China, it sells for CAD$76. Currently, they have 15 beers working full-time, with Winnie as head of research and development and staff training.

On our way to the next interview, we stopped in at an elegant cake café. It was probably as good as the best cake shops in Paris. The cakes were small, but you could not have possibly put more into them. My choice was a chocolate layer cake infused with 12-year-old single malt scotch. Heavenly!

Next on the tour was the Sunmai Taphouse, for two flights of beer and a delicious assortment of matched appetizers (I have found in my three visits to Taiwan that is only good food; really good food). I met with Daniel Chen and Peggy Hsu, head of Sales and Marketing. They explained that the brewery has two sites across from each other with 60 employees, running two shifts. They make a wide variety of beers including a Coffee Stout, a Smoked Beer and a Spring Beer. Their seasonals include a Basil Lager and a Stone Fruit Beer. The styles of beer were spot on, and the variety was superb.

At 8:30 p.m., my guide and I headed to our fourth and last interview of the day, Taiwan Head Brewers Brewing Company, founded in 2015. Head brewer and co-founder Leo Yeh says, “We brew up to 20 different beers a year, with over 30 different styles since we started. Our most famous is our Tea Beer with four kinds of tea.” Also on the list are coffee, jasmine, and chocolate brews. It would seem that there is no fear of giving beer consumers lots of variety to choose from.

Taiwan Head Brewers partners Leo and Jason Yeh with a presentation of their delicious craft beers

Leo studied bioengineering at university. He used his knowledge to grow and market yeast cultures to homebrewers. Originally a baker, his passion for home-brewing got the better of him, and after six years of brewing as a hobby, he decided to make it business. He mentions that “Buying homebrew ingredients from the USA cost him up to ten times more than what homebrewers in North America pay. By the time the ingredients arrive, they are no longer fresh.”
Currently, Leo is using three separate breweries to contract brewing their beer at. (In Taiwan as here, the brewery making the beer must be identified on the bottle.) Next year they will open their own brewery. Leo sees their 10 full-time staff doubling at that point. He mentions that they plan on a canning line, which will be a challenge. For the brewers, cans are much better economically and preserve the beer for a longer time, but beer in bottles is a cultural thing.

Mid-afternoon, as I headed towards the airport, there was one more brewery to visit. A late addition to my itinerary, I felt it could not be missed. Buckskin Brewery, which belongs to the King Car Group that owns the aforementioned Ka Va Lan distillery, is the newest on the scene. On my EVA Flight to Taipei, I experienced my first can of their beer (a hefeweizen). They guarantee it contains no preservatives or additives.

When I arrived, I was taken on a formal tour of the brewery, peering through the large glass windows at the production swirling away below. At the end of the tour, I asked if there was any chance to meet the brewer. My wish was granted! I got to sit down with Jonas Krebs, the 24-year-old Brewmaster. He had studied in Germany and went to South Africa to be an assistant brewer. When the opportunity came to step in as Brewmaster at Buckskin, he was ready.

Buckskin started as a macro brewery from day one, and the volume of beer produced here is second only to Taiwan Brewery. After just less than a year, they already command 5% of the Taiwan beer market. Due to the massive distribution network already in place with King Car Group, marketing the beer is quite easy.

Currently, their range includes Kölsch, altbier, hefeweizen, Märzen and rauchbier. All beers are made in the German style, with only four ingredients. Amazingly, in their first year, they won gold for the Kölsch, altbier, and rauchbier in the First Annual Asia International Beer Competition. I had the privilege of sitting with Jonas in the manager’s product tasting room and going through all the beers in the current portfolio. He shares, “We first do a test brew of 500 litres on our pilot to try new recipes to make sure everything works.” The Märzen and rauchbier were particularly delicious.

Time was running out; I had to go for dinner and get to the airport. I stopped at Starbucks and picked up two different coffee collaboration beers from Taihu to accompany my dinner. Ivy, my guide, somehow convinced the restaurant manager to allow me to drink these bottles with dinner. That was good because I certainly had no more room in my suitcase full of beer and whiskey for more beer. I got past the airport security re-scan when Ivy explained it was only beer in my bags, and back I went to Canada.

I asked all the brewers about the future of craft beer in Taiwan. Everyone admitted that last year’s expansion had stalled due to too many players jumping into the market. Things have stabilized now, and it looks like the market will see slow but continual growth. As far as the macro breweries go, micro craft breweries see them as a good addition. Buckskin is pushing the traditional breweries to make better quality. Also, the Taiwanese people are getting used to different flavours of beer.

I also asked about beer and tourism. Could an Ale Trail, similar to what we have in British Columbia, be possible in Taiwan? Everyone thought that would be a great addition to promotion of craft beer on the island.

I must thank Taiwan Tourism and my guide Ivy for making arrangements to meet all these great beer people. Taiwan is easy to travel; it could be your next beer tourism destination.

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**Buckskin’s Brew Master Jonas Krebs shares a few German style brews**

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**Wonderful welcoming at Taipei Brewery**

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**DAY FOUR**

This was the day to visit large macro breweries. The morning started off where it all began in Taiwan: at the Taipei Brewery. A team of 12 staff greeted us at the entrance. This is one of four government-run breweries, with the largest making three styles mentioned above: Taiwanese Lager, Taiwan Gold Award Lager, and Amber. Also, a beer called Taiwan 18 Day Draft in 600 ml date-stamped green bottles, which must be consumed within 18 days of bottling or be dumped!

The site I visited was Taiwan’s first brewery since 1919. After the defeat of the Japanese in 1945, the brewery’s name changed from Takasago (the Japanese name for Taiwan) to Monopoly, then in 1956 to Cheinko, and eventually became Taipei in 2002. At its peak in the 1950s, 600 people worked at the site. Currently, 63 people work in the brewery. With additional automation, this will be reduced to around 50. Taiwan Brewery had 100% percent of the market in 2002; in 2019 it is about 60%.

Taipei Brewing launched its new craft beer program in 2018 under the name of Baby. There are six offerings, including a Blonde Ale, American IPA, Osmanthus Herb Beer, Oatmeal Stout, German Wheat Beer and an Irish Red Ale.

Mr. Lu and assistant brewer Yu-Ying Chang hosted a wonderful lunch for me, my guide, and the whole Taipei crew, in their large beer hall. The pub food was delicious and accompanied by three-litre columns of lager. After lunch, I was given a tour of the original brewery. It was impressive. There are plans to turn it into a museum, and I would recommend all beer tourists go and see.

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**BRIAN K. SMITH, MPA** is an accredited member of the BC Association of Travel Writers and is Chief Photographer for What’s Brewing.
A lot has been written about the West Coast’s importance in the development of North America’s craft beer scene. Deservedly so, since the pioneering breweries in both the US and Canada appeared on the Pacific side of the continent, and Cascadia hosts the craft world’s most influential hop growing territory.

It’s a fact that BC consistently outperforms other Canadian provinces in terms of craft beer market share and major awards won. With all this, one could be forgiven for feeling that our seniority and pedigree afford Left Coasters a superior position in the annals of Canadian brewing.

However, we see evidence at Vancouver’s Farmhouse Festival and Victoria’s Great Canadian Beer Festival that some of Canada’s best breweries reside in that darned, smug Ontario. There’s no province more self-satisfied, well, except maybe British Columbia. Anyway, one must admit (if only grudgingly) that, if one happened to find oneself in or around Universe Central, one might want to stop in and check some of them out. The Beer Seekers faced just that type of temptation this past summer and caved in readily.

We’re in the GT, Eh

The Greater Toronto Area has its fair share of breweries and beer bars. With only a couple of days in town, we had to be choosy.

An absolute must-visit was Bellwoods Brewery, with two locations. We were the envy of beer friends and family when we posted pictures from their original Ossington Ave brewpub, open late on a Thursday night. There were nine beers on tap, including some of the best beers of the trip, like Fruit Helmet: an incredibly delicious tart beer that looks and tastes like beer with pink grapefruit juice.

Bellwoods Brewery

It’s not impossible to find a Bellwoods brew on tap in BC; in fact, right after our trip, son Kevin posted us back while
The Ale Yards

Named after the industry that defines it, Toronto’s Stockyards District has an inglorious reputation that’s being transformed by a Port Moody-like row of breweries including Junction Craft Brewing, Rainhard and Shacklands. In 2017, the trio released a collab brew named Aleyards IPA that cemented their alternative neighbourhood moniker.

If you don’t like the strong smell of dead livestock being processed, approach the Ale Yards from the West rather than the East. Otherwise you’ll walk through a vegetarian’s nightmare: massive slaughterhouses lining both sides of the road. Fortunately, the breweries a block away are safely stench-free once you step inside.

Amsterdam BrewHouse is a massive brewpub on the waterfront next to the CN Tower. The list of ~10 taps is presented in four categories: Crisp, Hoppy, Malt (only one beer, their Brown Ale) and Seasonal. The beer was good, and so was the food; not extraordinary, but solid. It’s a worthwhile visit, based on location and history.

That history began in a small location as Amsterdam Brasserie and Brewpub in 1986 and evolved in 1988 when a second location called The Rotterdam opened. A few star BC brewers like Trading Post’s Tony Dewald got their start at the Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

In particular you have to see the Shacklands tasting room, festooned with a hodgepodge of pop culture bric-a-brac. The beer is fantastic. But the best moment was when operator Dave Watts pulled out the second-ever issue of Northern Brewer, subtitled Canada’s Beer Magazine, published 1989. Mentioned in there is John Mitchell—recognized, then as now, as the pioneer of Canadian microbrewing—as well as a list of Canadian micros including all five in BC at the time. It was a great wrap-up to a hasty Toronto brewery tour.

The best part of visiting Beerbistro was getting to meet What’s Brewing illustrator Emile Compion (a.k.a. Montevarious), who lives in T.O. We’re still impressed that he reached out to us years ago and joined our team from afar. He gave us what is now our most prized beer mat: a coaster featuring his artwork printed by Hamilton’s “art+brewing” specialists Collective Arts Brewing.

Today, the Rotterdam’s old King Street West location is a Bier Markt, part of a chain with several locations across the GTA, Ottawa, Montreal and beyond. We visited and found that, while the beer list is extensive, only some of it is draught, and some of that is macro-owned. For instance, their Esplanade location is promoted as “Canada’s first Goose Island Craft Brewhouse.” Overall, the selection was not quite as interesting as Beerbistro, but there were still several excellent choices to be had.

Located in the heart of downtown at King Street and Yonge, Beerbistro is an upscale taproom co-founded by Canada’s most famous beer writer, Stephen Beaumont. Although the beer list is heavily focused on bottles (100+), they also have 22 taps featuring a variety of beers from around Ontario, other parts of Canada, and the rest of the world. Two of the lines are one-keg-only offerings that are constantly rotating.

The best part of visiting Beerbistro was getting to meet What’s Brewing illustrator Emile Compion (a.k.a. Montevarious), who lives in T.O. We’re still impressed that he reached out to us years ago and joined our team from afar. He gave us what is now our most prized beer mat: a coaster featuring his artwork printed by Hamilton’s “art+brewing” specialists Collective Arts Brewing.
COTTAGE COUNTRY CALLING

While most of our vacations are centred around exploring breweries, the real reason for this summer’s travel was a family wedding at a “cottage” (as the ubiquitousOntarian summer house is termed by well-heeled Torontonians) on a small corner of Georgian Bay. Not for nothing do we call ourselves the Beer Seekers, so after the festivities were safely over, we got down to the business of experiencing breweries. Ontario has over 300 of them. A good many are crowded around the GTA, but thankfully quite a few are sprinkled throughout cottage country too.

Heading north from Toronto, Hwy 400 zooms through the city of Barrie, the gateway to Ontario’s vast Lake Country recreational region. The highway is busy every Friday afternoon as endless numbers of urbanites make their way toward the peace and quiet of their cottages. As the map indicates, whether you choose to head west from Barrie or continue north into Muskoka, you can easily find breweries to explore.

For help planning your trip, turn to the Cottage Country Beer Trail website. They are working on a passport you can take around to the region’s breweries. But no matter what, you must go through Barrie.

BRACEBRIDGE: MUSKOKA

Even here in BC, with all our widespread territory and 180 breweries, it’s hard to conceive of something like Muskoka Brewery. Picture a gigantic beer factory in the middle of nowhere. No railway, no major truck route. Not in a city or town. In a way, this defines the Ontario brewery that’s best known for marketing the cottage country lifestyle.

Muskoka is more or less tied with Steam Whistle as the largest independent brewery in Ontario. What impressed us most during our brewery tour was the size. From its beginnings in 1996 in an 8000 square foot building, Muskoka’s footprint has expanded tenfold to its current 82,000 ft² operation. Just the cold room—a 10,000 ft² refrigerator that spans the entire width of the plant’s back wall—is larger than most craft breweries.

Its location contrasts with, for example, Central City Brewing’s purpose-built 65,000 ft² facility in Surrey. Deliberately constructed off the newly-built South Fraser Perimeter Road in 2012-2013, that brewery is directly connected to a major shipping route. Even the Columbia Brewing plant, famous in its day for a brand marketed as Kokanee, glacier fresh, was built in Creston city proper. But if you want to get to Muskoka Brewing, you have to take the same kind of pastoral back road you take to somebody’s cottage.

“It was always important for Muskoka Brewing to be in Muskoka,” says Val Hamilton, Marketing Communications Manager. As she understated, “we could have saved a couple bucks [on shipping] by moving to Toronto.” But their roots in the Bracebridge area were planted too deeply thanks to the community involvement that kept the brewery in existence many years ago. Muskoka’s gratitude for this is reflected in their Community Venture Fund series of grants to worthy local causes, backed up by products like this Dry Saison collab. with Vancouver Island Brewing—which Muskoka bought a couple of years ago. That’s right: they own a significant brewery here in BC (the one major province where their own products aren’t really present).

Collab with BC division Vancouver Island Brewing
GRAVENHURST: SAWDUST CITY

When you pull up to Sawdust City Brewing Co., the first thing you see is the world’s largest Muskoka chair in the parking lot. Having just come from Muskoka Brewing, we were mindful of their trademark and wondered if there was some friendly patio furniture rivalry going on between breweries. Turns out that chair’s been in Gravenhurst for ages, and Sawdust became the new caretakers in 2015.

Like Muskoka, Sawdust City had an early connection with the Canadian Brewing Awards—but not from winning them. Sawdust City is owned by Rob Engman of TAPS beer magazine, who operates the annual competition. For that reason, they tend to stay out of the awards. But head brewer Sam Corbeil doesn’t mind.

Engman’s connections are a serious benefit to Corbeil and the brewing team, because they have the ability to network with the entire Canadian craft brewing scene. For instance, Sawdust did a collab. beer with last issue’s cover brewery Cannery Brewing of Penticton.

Aside from these noteworthy distinctions, the real reason to come to Sawdust is the massive amount of brewing experimentation going on. Corbeil, who learned his chops in Germany, then worked at Niagara College Teaching Brewery, which is similar to Langley’s KPU Brewing & Brewery Operations department. Sam is fully trained but has that homebrewer ethic: he loves to tinker, and it shows in how the brew team works.

Their signature customer membership program is called the 52 Pickup Beer Club, for which they commit one new brew each week. There’s no cheating, according to Corbeil; that is 52 honest-to-goodness new and different recipes each year. As they state, “we’re nothing if not ambitious.” You don’t have to be a member to enjoy all this variety; if you live in Gravenhurst, you just visit the tasting room (and their spanking new patio, which opened the week of our visit) regularly and watch the 18 taps change.

Also, like Muskoka, there is a staff brew program in which various team members get their own chance to conceive full-on branded products replete with label design. The week we were there, there was a release cleverly named Lumberbrau. At 20+hl, these staff brews are a real commitment.

Sawdust definitely mixes it up and covers all beer styles, but there is a category they’re especially known for. Each year the brewery hosts FunkFest, a celebration of sour & barrel-aged beers. Much like our Farmhouse Festival, it can draw up to 1500 people—but these aren’t West Coast beer geeks on a posh university field. These are regular townsfolk and beer fans in a small-town parking lot quaffing sours. That’s some pretty impressive local beer education Sawdust has pulled off. Apparently the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance thought so too, awarding FunkFest Culinary Tourism Event of the Year.

Each year, Sawdust releases a wild yeast lambic as part of its Limberlost series, in large 750ml bottles. We were pleased to try the 2019 release with wild blueberries.

Many thanks to Marketing Manager Brittany Williams for arranging a great experience. Sawdust City is a classic brewery with the true ethos of craft: doing it for the passion, not just for the job. It reminded us why we write stories about breweries and the people that make them.

“Even though we are this big, we feel small,” Hamilton shares. And their culture reflects that, winning them Canada’s 10 Most Admired Corporate Cultures recognition in multiple years. “People want to work here; there’s not much turnover, and lots of buzz when a position opens up,” states Val, who had to beat out 350 applicants to earn her job.

Every morning, team members get together for “sensory time,” where they start the day with a product evaluation session and a chance to “cheers the beer.” Team members are given sensory training and enrolled in the Prud’homme beer education program.

Another team-focused program is the Moonlight Kettle series, in which a brewer teams up with two other staff members who get the chance to design their own brew.

Muskoka’s original flagship beer was their Cream Ale, winning Best Canadian Ale at the 1996 Canadian Brewing Awards & Conference. They’ve trademarked that product, and their logo, with the region’s iconic Muskoka chair, cementing their positioning as Ontario’s leisure beer brand.

Hamilton observes, “I think Muskoka as a region is very desirable for people in Ontario,” and names Tofino (the region) as a BC analogy. “We always think about whether the Muskoka name helps or hurts us,” she admits. Interestingly, one would assume that they are a summer-only brand, but their sales are strong in winter as well. “People share their Muskoka beer photos in the winter. Maybe it’s a little taste of summer” for people aspiring to be at their cottage, she opines.

Many thanks to Val Hamilton, as well as tour guide Adam, for an informative tour and tasting, and kind generosity.
WHAT STYLE IS THIS BEER AGAIN?

>> J. RANDOM

Regular readers know J. Random is notoriously sensitive to funkiness, sourness, fusel alcohols, phenolics, and excessive fruity esters. These flavours may be highly appropriate in some beer styles, but when I find them spoiling styles not advertised as hybrids, I am not at all happy. Drinkers who do like Belgian, sour, and funky styles also get peeved when their favourite northwest IPA develops these tendencies.

When I interviewed her for my Summer 2019 article, Jessica Swanson of Bright Brewers Yeast particularly noted the frequency of inappropriate phenolics in local beers. It seems that these issues are becoming increasingly common in the BC beer scene. What I rudely call “Belgian flavours” can come from poorly cleaned beer lines, but that would not explain finding it in cans. They can also sometimes be caused by an English or American ale yeast simply becoming stressed out. But the more likely cause is the increasing prevalence of cross-contamination among the yeast strains or mixed cultures with bacteria being used at the brewery.

Historically, contamination was a minor issue in German, British and American breweries that produced a narrow range of styles, used one highly domesticated yeast culture (though DNA techniques have now shown some of these to be mixed Saccharomyces strains), and paid rigorous attention to sanitation. Admittedly, beer from a few British breweries—particularly those using the Burton Union system—had small contributions from Brettanomyces, but that was a characteristic of all beers from that brewery.

As mentioned in my Summer 2019 article, domesticated yeasts rarely produce the type of spores that blow around in the air. Mostly these older breweries would have been worried about wild yeasts and bacteria coming in from outside.

Cross-contamination within a brewery from yeast and bacteria is a uniquely North American problem, probably due to our craft brewers’ success in introducing new and different beer styles to the drinking public. In order to brew all these styles, breweries may be using several different strains of yeast and one or two bacterial cultures.

When I dropped in to talk to Conrad Gmoser in July, eight of the ten beers on tap at Brassneck Brewery involved unique strains or blends. I wanted to find out how they deal with contamination while brewing a range of styles from reliably clean-tasting Passive Aggressive Pale Ale to some pretty wild and crazy beers, all in a tiny space. Brewers like Conrad go to great lengths to combat cross-contamination by cleaning their equipment thoroughly between brews. Typically, this involves disassembling some components and giving them a power rinse with hot water, a caustic wash, another rinse, and a flush with a no-rinse sanitizer (that breaks down to innocuous flavourless compounds). Gmoser says, “I am a great believer in heat. Heat can penetrate where sanitizer may not.” Because he is brewing so many different styles, he is typically not pitching yeast from one batch into the next, which dramatically reduces the potential for contamination to build up. Of course, most production breweries need to re-pitch yeast to control their costs.

Russian River Brewing has another solution, probably beyond the resources of our smaller craft breweries: its new operation in Windsor, California has a separate building they call their ‘Funky Brewery’ just for sour and barrel-aged beers. People working in there are not allowed to enter the main (non-funky) fermentation
room that day. Because they are using open-top fermenters, the main room has air brought in through HEPA filters with UV sterilization. The room is also maintained under positive pressure to prevent yeasts and bacteria blowing in—or fruit flies getting in—when the doors are opened. Furthermore, the canning line for their funky beers is separate from the one for their clean beers. So, no worries about unpleasant surprises in your next Pliny the Younger.

Cross-contamination not only creates unwanted flavours but may cause over-attenuation and gushers from cans and bottles of unfiltered beer. This is because the pitched yeast dominates the brew during primary fermentation but drops out of suspension when it has used up the nutrients it can metabolize. Any contaminating yeasts and bacteria can then start multiplying using dextrins and alcohol that the wanted yeast leaves behind. All brewers will taste each batch before packaging and some breweries will have a tasting panel. But contamination may be barely noticeable prior to canning, especially with the trend towards hazy beers with complex flavour profiles. It develops further during transport and storage and becomes more obvious, but the brewer may not be checking on the condition of their product once it gets into the supply chain.

So here’s a shout-out to Yeast Van’s Luppolo Brewing for deciding to withdraw their Barrel-Aged Imperial Stout due to Brett contamination. As they said on their website on June 11, 2019, “We at Luppolo love to experiment with multiple strains of Brettanomyces as well as Lactobacillus and Pediococcus, although we have rigorous standards of practice to prevent cross-contamination, on rare occasions we are unsuccessful. While the beer is completely safe to consume, we feel it doesn’t represent the original intention of this beer release and we have decided to recall it.”

The advent of breweries like House of Funk suggests the potential for increased specialization, and I would very much support that trend, provided some of our breweries focus on turning out clean-tasting beers for us boring folk.

Thanks to Regi Autar of Reg’s Beer Adventures for the photos, information on Russian River Brewing, and the heads-up on Luppolo’s withdrawal of a contaminated beer.

J. Random is a former VP of CAMRA Vancouver, beer fan for 4 decades and occasional homebrewer. Has been penning the Ullage & Spillage column for What’s Brewing since 2003.
As a homebrewer, I used to make saisons in the summer. I don’t have a temperature-controlled fermentation chamber, but saison yeast performs very well under fermentation temperatures as high as 35°C, so it worked for me. How times have changed! Now I can make a good clean ale at similar temperatures using the new miracle yeasts known as kveik.

Kveik is much more temperature- and alcohol-tolerant than typical brewers’ yeasts. It will be quite happy with temperatures as high as 37°C while happily tackling brews with the potential for up to 16% alcohol by volume (ABV). The icing on the cake (or the head on the pint) is that your beer will finish fermenting in half the time.

As with regular ale yeasts, different strains can contribute different flavours. Some are fruity and citrussy, while one contributes stone fruit and pineapple. In my experience, these flavours are subdued and the finished beers are quite clean when fermented at normal ale temperatures (16 to 24°C). The yeast character becomes more noticeable when fermented at higher temperature.

You may need to leave more head space in your fermenter and use a blow-off tube instead of an airlock, as the yeast is very active and completes the job so quickly. Activity can be visible within a few hours of pitching. I have seen many photos from homebrewers documenting the mess this yeast can make. You have been warned.

DAVE’S TOP 5 KVEIK STARTER TIPS

Dave Henry from Full Barrel Homebrew Club has been experimenting with kveik for almost three years. These are his top five tips:

1. **Pitching rate is important.** To get complete attenuation and yeast character, you should pitch much less yeast than regular saccharomyces yeasts. Pitching too much can lead to a stalled fermentation (usually at a specific gravity of 1.020) and a lack of the fruity characteristics these yeasts are known for. Most homebrew packs have far too much yeast for a 20-litre batch. I normally make a one-litre starter and then pitch 2 teaspoons into 44 litres.

2. **Temperature matters.** Word of mouth says these yeasts work best at 40°C, but it depends on the strain. Most work best at 32-35°C for fermentation temperature. That means pitching at 28-30°C and letting the brew rise to the mid-30s on its own. I’ve also had success with certain strains fermenting at lager temps, as low as 10-12°C. Temperatures above 40°C can cause most strains to shut down and take a nap.

3. **Oxygen matters.** Adding pure oxygen is the best practice with all yeast. Kveik ferments are at their healthiest with close to double the oxygen other saccharomyces yeasts require. I oxygenate for 60 seconds before pitching and then for another 60 seconds the following day.

4. **Yeast nutrients matter.** Kveik yeasts need twice as much nutrients as other saccharomyces yeasts. Double whatever you normally use or add the regular amount twice, once in the kettle and again during high krausen.

5. **Gravity matters.** Kveik is domesticated to ferment high-gravity worts. Traditional Norwegian farmhouse beers are usually 7% ABV and higher. Most kveik strains can easily handle a 15% ABV beer. Consequently, they’re not all that fond of fermenting lower-alcohol beers and attenuation becomes inconsistent. The first four tips above become extremely important as the starting gravity of your wort drops below 1.060, especially the pitching rate.

Dave added that *kveik* is a regional Norwegian dialect word for yeast. It’s not a beer style. You didn’t brew a “Kveik”, you fermented a beer with kveik yeast. And using kveik doesn’t make your beer a Norwegian or Norwegian-style beer. It’s not a Norwegian IPA, it’s an IPA fermented with kveik. That’s very important terminology. These farmers have passed these remarkable yeasts strains down through many generations, and each family’s yeast is unique to them. We’re lucky they’ve allowed us to use them. There are a lot of different strains, so don’t get stuck just using one. Have fun experimenting.

Dave also shared this blog where he first learned of kveik and was able to obtain vials of cultures: [www.garshol.priv.no/blog](http://www.garshol.priv.no/blog).

Now that you know more about kveik, go pick some up and make some beer! 🍺
WE'RE OPEN IN OUR NEW LOCATION!
Same great prices and service, even better selection of grain, hops and yeast!

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!

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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
The craft beer scene in the South Okanagan is really heating up these days. It’s pretty exciting for a craft beer lover, with lots of fresh news and exciting developments.

**Slackwater Brewing**, the newest brewery on the Penticton Ale Trail, opened in June and quickly became a must-visit location. A former nightclub has been completely transformed into a modern and welcoming spot featuring indoor and outdoor sections on two floors. Parties with kids can enjoy the craft beer and pub-inspired food on the ground floor, and adults can head up to the mezzanine that overlooks the brewhouse or soak up the Okanagan sunshine on the rooftop patio. There’s free live music every Saturday evening in September.

**Neighbourhood Brewing**, Penticton’s seventh brewery hasn’t yet broken ground on their new building, but they are brewing beer now and recently launched their first two beers in four-packs of 355 mL cans. We are excited to welcome them to the neighbourhood and thrilled that they can participate in various Penticton Ale Trail events.

**Breakaway Brewing**, opened in July with a number of their own small batch beers and collabs and local cider. Their beer and their great hand-made lunch and dinner menu items, including paninis, flatbreads, and desserts, feature local ingredients. Savour the taste of Summerland!

Summerland’s first brewery, **Detonate Brewing**, is putting the final touches on a newly expanded space, which should be open by the time you read this. The new 28 seat taproom will have expanded hours and feature local wine and cider and a small selection of food. They plan to further increase their food menu and hours over time.

Fall is a great time to visit the Okanagan. The weather is still beautifully warm enough for golf, hiking, cycling and other outdoor pursuits that pair perfectly with visits to your favourite craft breweries. Get your Penticton Ale Trail passport stamped at each location for your chance to win a sweet quarterly prize package. Check out the [BC Ale Trail website](#) for help planning your trip to the Okanagan, and download the BC Ale Trail app to collect points on your travels.

Another great reason to come to the South Okanagan in the fall is the annual Oliver Cask & Keg Fest, coming up on October 5. This event is part of the fall Okanagan Wine Festival, so you can take in some local wine and craft beer events. Plan to attend the after-party at **Firehall Brewery**, where they’ll have a DJ and an outside bar. Firehall will also announce the release dates for their annual Carson Ruhland Memorial Harvest Ale, Wind & Fire, at the festival. If you can’t attend, watch for this deep, dark, complex fresh-hopped, multigrain seasonal on tap and in 650 mL bombers.

Also this fall, there’s the Pentastic Jazz Festival, the Penticton Dragon Boat Festival, and the Freak ‘n Farmer Adventure Obstacle Race, all featuring local craft beers. And of course the annual Penticton Oktoberfest, coming up on October 19 at the Penticton Lakeside Resort. Enjoy local beers as well as German imports, mouth-watering food, and entertainment that will get you dancing.

To round out the season, the fourth annual **CAMRA SO** (Campaign for Real Ale South Okanagan) Home Brewers Competition will be back again on November 9. This is a great opportunity to meet a number of home brewers from the Okanagan, try a selection of their beers, and vote for your favourites.

If a trip to the Okanagan isn’t in the cards this fall, watch for our South Okanagan breweries at a number of events including Great Canadian Beer Fest, Whistler Village Beer Fest, and Brewloops. If you are planning to hit up Brewloops, head to Kamloops a day early and kick off the event at a Penticton Ale Trail tap takeover at **Red Beard Café** on September 26. All seven Penticton breweries will be there, pouring two beers each. Meet the brewery teams and enter for your chance to win great prizes, including a one-night stay at the Penticton Lakeside Resort, two tickets to Penticton Oktoberfest, and a gift certificate from each of the Penticton breweries.
This has been a spectacular year for craft beer in Northern BC. There have been craft beer festivals in Williams Lake and Quesnel (Cari-boo Craft Beer Festival). In Prince George, the CrossRoads Brewing Street Festival Series returned and there have been two events to date, with the third slated for the autumn. The Valemount Craft Beer Experience was received with open arms once again. Those at Three Ranges Brewing Company in Valemount are truly great folks making great beers and doing great things for the community. On a smaller scale, it’s very common for many local craft breweries to host game nights, live music, and other smaller events at their locations. Some are for charitable causes such as Rounds For Hounds, which Trench Brewing & Distilling hosted for BC SPCA North Cariboo.

Northern BC craft breweries are being showcased in other parts of the province, too. Trench Brewing & Distilling had their own booth at the 2019 Vancouver Craft Beer Week weekend beer festival, and Smithers Brewing Co. was featured on tap at the BC Ale Trail-er. Speaking of the BC Ale Trail, Barkerville Brewing’s Sluice Juice Pale Ale was featured on their Summer’s Best Beers list. Finally, Cross-Roads Brewing, Wheelhouse Brewing Co. and Smithers Brewing Co. are at the 2019 Great Canadian Beer Festival in Victoria.

The availability of Northern BC craft beers in Prince George is continuing to expand through licenced establishments and stores. More locals are supporting these fine craft breweries. You can find CrossRoads and Trench beers at the CN Center in Prince George. Northern Fancon 2019 featured craft beers from Trench and Barkerville. Trench has been at the Prince George Farmers’ Market. Barkerville was once again the beer sponsor/supplier at the ArtsWells festival. Three Ranges was the official beer supplier at the 2019 Robson Valley Music Festival in Dunster. In McBride, Three Ranges beer is on tap at the Giggling Grizzly Pub. The Roadhouse restaurant, west of Dawson Creek in Arras, continues to have a rotating BC craft beer tap. There are craft offerings at the Rolla Pub north of Dawson Creek, too. Original Joe’s in Dawson Creek boasts an impressive craft beer selection and features Fort St. John’s Mighty Peace Brewing and Beard’s Brewing craft beers on tap. Even at Prince George’s Northern Lights Estate Winery, there’s an impressive packaged craft beer selection.

Yet, I feel there is still room for improvement in Prince George and Northern BC. Many establishments and stores are sticking with macro beers and offering products like Shock Top, Goose Island, Belgian Moon, Rickard’s Red and Sleeman as a consolation prize for craft fans. I foresee a change in the next few years, though, as local restaurants, chains, stores, venues and event organizers hear and acknowledge the voice of the people wanting real craft beer. One day, macros will no longer dominate around here.

Prince George craft breweries keep things interesting by adding new releases while maintaining great core lineups. Cross-Roads hosts Cask Fridays, while Trench Brewing has a highly coveted pilot batch program. And Barkerville teamed up with other Northern BC craft breweries to release a Pink Boots Society Collaboration brew for the second year in a row.

Many craft breweries throughout the north, from 100 Mile House to Fort St. John, Vale-mount to Prince Rupert, continue to release solid offerings. I really enjoy Pine Pass Pale Ale from Trench, Iron Bridge Oatmeal Stout from CrossRoads, High Stakes Imperial IPA from Barkerville, Killer Wit from Wheelhouse Brewing Co. and Tail Slap IPA from Three Ranges.

Once again, the craft beer revolution in Northern BC is growing. It’s all thanks to a true pioneer and one of the founding fathers of BC and Canadian craft beer, Alexander John Mitchell. Thank you and cheers, good sir.

All in all, when it comes to craft as a whole, especially with what’s happening in Prince George and Northern BC, I think that the macros will never replicate or beat our craft beer.
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It’s been a few years since there have been any specifically beer-related movie releases. The last one was probably Crafting a Nation in 2013, with How Beer Changed the World (2011) and The American Brew (2009) coming a few years before. But since 2013, the broader booze documentary has taken a massive leap forward, thanks to the intimate and immersive The Birth of Sake (2015) as well as the three Somm films beginning in 2013 (Somm, Somm: Into the Bottle, and Somm 3).

To the joy of beer drinkers everywhere, two new beer documentaries have recently been released. Both Brewmaster (2018) and Beers of Joy (2019) follow in the footsteps of the first Somm film. In that film, we watch a small group attempt to pass the intensely difficult Master Sommelier exam. The beer equivalent is the Master Cicerone exam and both new films look at people’s attempts to pass the exam. Ray Daniels, founder of the Cicerone program, features heavily in both movies, but otherwise, these two movies could not be more different.

Beers Of Joy

Warning bells sound early as the name Anheuser Busch appears in the opening credits of Beers of Joy as a producer. Anheuser Busch, maker of Budweiser, is part of AB InBev, a Belgian/Brazilian corporate conglomerate and the largest beer company in history. When this company isn’t making fun of serious beer drinkers in Super Bowl commercials, it’s buying up successful yet vulnerable craft breweries such as Goose Island Beer Co. and 10 Barrel Brewing Co. “Give the movie a chance,” you think. But you’re fooling yourself. You’ll soon want to light your seat on fire, pull the fire alarm and flee the theatre in revulsion and contempt.

The first of the three storylines of Beers of Joy follows Ryan Daley, a beer educator working for Anheuser Busch, and Joe Voelz carbohydrates, CEO and co-founder of Sugar Creek Brewing, as they attempt the Master Cicerone exam. An opening shot of a disproportionately large American flag is an unsubtle clue to one major theme; we then learn that Joe is an all-American hero, having served multiple military tours of duty. Next, some historians, including Patrick McGovern (a brief appearance), talk about humanity’s long history with beer. Soon this will be glossed over to move on to America’s long history with beer, and the main point: that drinking beer is American. There is a scene with the affable Charles W. Bamworth (Anheuser Busch Endowed Professor of Malting and Brewing Sciences at UC Davis) taking a quaff from a 10 Barrel pint glass.

This segues to the second storyline, which follows Tonya Corrett, an “innovation brewmaster” at 10 Barrel, as she travels around Europe researching how to brew the perfect Berliner Weisse. It is never pointed out that AB InBev owns 10 Barrel.

The third storyline follows Chef Sean Paxton as he researches the history of beer and food, which culminates in a historically accurate sixteenth century meal. Before that, though, he will visit the Anheuser Busch private archives, reinforcing the long history between beer (specifically Budweiser) and America.

If it isn’t already clear that this is a 120-minute long beer commercial, there are many other details that make it so, including visits to Italy’s Birra del Borgo, owned by guess who.
OUT & ABOUT: SUMMER 2019

>> SCOTTIE McLELLAN

It’s been a grand summer sampling BC craft beers and there are just so many choices, it is profound. Its what we’ve always dreamed of and our beer dreams have come true. You name your favourite style of beer and it is nearly always available in our province.

PHILLIPS HOPOXIA
June 1st, 2019 @ Phillips Brewing, Victoria

You can tell summer is kicking into gear when you attend this annual fresh and local event in the backyard of Phillips Brewing & Malting Co. Their staff are extremely helpful to all participants. This event has a wide array of local hoppy beers for the Victoria crowd to enjoy.

It’s also a chance to catch up with beer supporters and take in the friendly environment. Both patrons and brewers always enjoy this one. We always run into old friends of What’s Brewing; thank you for your great comments.

JOHN MITCHELL CELEBRATION OF LIFE
July 14th, 2019 @ Red Racer Taproom, Vancouver

Right off the top: congratulations to the organizers who made this possible and put it together.

There is so much to say about John and his life, and many people spoke on his achievements. It was a great pleasure to see John’s wife, Jenny, meet his family, and hang out with the beer people I’ve been acquainted with since very early days. It was a honour to get to speak about my friend and tell a wee bit of our adventures being out and about and enjoying beers together, both on the Island and the Mainland over the years.

Displays of his work that helped change the beer world forever were on display around the room at Red Racer.

For all those who contacted me about this event and the thousands who couldn’t be there: rest assured we celebrated this wonderful man, each of us together in that room for that reason.

GALIANO WINE AND BEER TASTING FESTIVAL
August 10th 2019 @ Galiano Island

What’s Brewing attends this annual event every year and I must say it is a very relaxed environment and setting. They set up at Lions field with tents in an oval. It is quite a pleaseant vibe. The ferries are convenient for both the island and the mainland so it’s a mixed, all-ages crowd. Patrons are well-behaved and the volunteers go overboard to be helpful to the folks pouring and attending.

Finger-food snacks are always available, so attendees aren’t drinking on an empty stomach. The organizers also provide a plate of snacks for the winery and brewery booths before the gates open.

This year there were fewer breweries, and a couple that didn’t manage to make it to the show. As a result, many of the booths pouring beer and other beverages were done early.

What’s Brewing always enjoys this event for its very easy-going theme where the community is invested in the event, making sure all people are taken care of.

Scottie McLeLLan
is a craft beer industry veteran and longtime supporter of BC’s Craft Beer Movement. He has written for What’s Brewing for over a quarter century.
You should definitely not support this movie financially in any way, but you could watch it just to remind yourself of the enemy’s party lines. Did you know that AB InBev employees are good people? They tell us every chance they get. Outside of Joe’s military service, there are a few scenes of Ryan being a good father while he stresses over the exam. Did you know that people don’t care who makes a beer as long as it’s good? It isn’t a lie, but who better to say it then AB InBev?

Beyond being an extended piece of corporate propaganda, Beers of Joy is just not a very good or entertaining movie. The three different storylines are one or two too many. The Cicerone exam sections have none of the interest that Somm had, watching the intense stress of the exam takers. For a brewmaster, 10 Barrels’ Tonya seems to ask some pretty entry-level questions on what comes across as public tours of European breweries. The whole “historical meal re-creation” has been seen many times before on TV and probably works better there. And what is this digression about the Reinheitsgebot that doesn’t really fit anywhere or seem to have any purpose? The overly pro-American attitude will likely alienate many viewers. The whole relationship between America and beer has been done much better in other movies, such as Crafting a Nation.

Brewmaster

A beer documentary I do recommend supporting is Brewmaster, directed by Douglas Tirola. This film was screened as part of the Victoria Film festival, and the ticket price included samples from three local Victoria breweries. The film was introduced by Paul Hadfield of Spinnakers fame, Sean Hoyne from Hoyne Brewing, and Danny Seeton from Vancouver Island Brewing. If that didn’t make you feel like you were in safe hands, then the fact that no macro beer company names appeared in the opening credits surely did.

Brewmaster also follows someone enduring the trials of the Master Cicerone exam, and one story involves a young man whose dream is to quit being a lawyer to open his own brewery. As with Beers of Joy, Ray Daniels appears in Brewmaster. The exam-taker deals with having a young family, but there are no belabored scenes of his great and responsible fathering. The Reinheitsgebot is referred to, this time by Dogfish Head’s Sam Calagione, who expresses more accurately the modern drinker’s ambivalence towards the law.

Brewmaster is a good movie, and not only in comparison to a two-hour Bud commercial. This is the movie that beer drinking fans of Somm were hoping for. It clearly follows the path of that movie without being derivative and transcends the beer documentaries that came before. Ultimately Brewmaster might not be as good as Somm, but most of us who drink beer more often than wine won’t care. Somm featured a lot of blind tastings of high-end wines I will never even see, let alone taste, while Brewmaster pairs perfectly with locally-made craft.

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.
MEET: THE BEER CADDY

Have you ever seen those lucky people at beer festivals with a lanyard that holds their tasting glass? What’s Brewing is proudly your source (and the only source in Canada, that we’re aware of) for these handy beer festival accessories.

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- People who eat things
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- People who don’t have a well-trained butler present at all times
- People who would love to never drop or lose their taster glass again
- People who possess two hands or less
- Generally anyone who attends beer festivals and is not an octopus

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