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in Sarasota, Manatee and Venice



Craft Beer Craze!

AREA RESTAURANTS RIDE THE CRAFT WAVE

Brewer's Talk

LEARN ABOUT AREA BREWERIES



Herald-Tribune
media group

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On the Cover: Tacos and a flight at Oak & Stone. Photo by Perry Johnson.

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Craft Beer Craze

AREA RESTAURANTS RIDE THE CRAFT WAVE

There is no better time to explore and enjoy local craft beer than now. Just look at the numbers. In Sarasota and Manatee, the amount of craft breweries has grown from three places in 2012 to more than ten five years later.

Those statistics echo the growth of craft beer across the country. In 1981 there were only 82 breweries in the United States. Today we have more than 5,300 independent craft breweries, each producing original, creative brewskys.

Experts say that the 'millennials' are driving the trend. For this group, described as people born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s, craft beer is their thing. But they are not the only demographic who is embracing the amber waves of grain. Women add to the growth statistics, as do people who want to support the 'locally made' movement that is also prevalent in the culinary world.

"Ten or 15 years ago, (craft beer) was driven by the affluent, well educated, older white male, said Bruce Folkins, beverage director at Bradenton's Pier 22 restaurant. "Today the millennials comprise about 58 percent and, while breweries used to only be in urban areas, now 75 percent of people of legal drinking age have a craft beer brewery within 10 miles of where they

CRAFT BEER CRAZE

live."There are many reasons for this:

Crafting beer is an art. "Craft beer is an art that you can drink," said Patrick Goesser, assistant general manager and unofficial "beer ambassador" at Oak & Stone in Lakewood Ranch. "Craft brewers are constantly pursuing new avenues of flavor profiles and are never satisfied with the status quo, just like an artist who pushes the boundaries is intent on breaking new ground in his or her art."

Crafting beer is also a science and may be even a philosophy. The University of South Florida now offers a Brewing Arts program at its campus in St. Petersburg. The syllabus includes subjects that range from 'the chemistry of hop constituents,' to 'the archaeology and indigenous knowledge of brewing.'

Craft beer is as celebrated as wine. "It's poured into a special glass. It is paired with foods like red or white wine," said Diana Eibler, CEO of Naughty Monk Brewery in Bradenton. "We have people who come round and drink from a goblet while smoking an expensive cigar."

The quality of craft beer is without parallel. "Beer production has been around for thousands of years and these new breweries make a truer form of the actual beer beverage," said Ralph Whigham, manager at Snook Haven in Venice. "They use the best ingredients so the beer has



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It is an ‘affordable’ luxury. “The modern beer drinker is more willing to take risks,” said Folkins. “My personal theory? It’s an affordable luxury. Not everyone can run out and buy a Ferrari. It is easier to go ahead and pay \$2 more and get a richer beer.”

In addition to the commitment and enthusiasm of local breweries, (see Brewers’ Talk: Q&A ... starting on pg. 14) area restaurants are increasingly embracing the positive qualities of offering craft beer.

“People want to drink craft beer because they are interested in what is new, what is around them locally and they want quality and variety,” said Whigham.

Snook Haven is a fitting setting to enjoy the kind of beer that harkens back to a time when it was only made in small batches. Here, the Myakka River is still wild

and scenic, the restaurant serves old school barbeque and smoked delights, banjo players come once a week to jam and the bar has 16 taps with 13 of them offering craft beer.

Whigham, who waxes quite eloquently in ‘beer geek’, said Snook Haven has long featured local and area beers. Some current ones on tap include Pulp Friction Grapefruit IPA and V Twin

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Vienna Lager from Motorworks Brewing in Bradenton and the Jai Alai India Pale Ale from Cigar City Brewing, Tampa. "IPA's tend to be hoppy so (Motorworks) uses the oils and zest from grapefruit which increases the easy drinkability of the beer. It is great for the summer-time," he explained.

Blues and Brews at Blue Rooster

When it opened in the burgeoning Rosemary District in 2013, the Blue Rooster gave downtown Sarasota something it was missing: New Orleans-style live music with a modern, creative Southern food menu and a honky-tonk, craft beer bent.

Owner Bill Cornelius recalls that when he purchased the building it already housed a restaurant called Darwin's on 4th that was making small batches of brew to pair with its Andean-style food. Flash forward to 2017 where Darwin's Brewery in Bradenton chugs out barrels of craft beer for itself, for Blue Rooster and many other area restaurants.

"The Blue Rooster has always served a mix of craft beer and popular beers. When we first opened, Darwin's wasn't permitted to sell beer other than in the restaurant, so I sourced other Florida craft beers," said Cornelius. "Now I have 10 taps of draught and seven are craft: all of which are Darwin Brewing Company beers. We also have Stella, Bud Lite and Yuengling."

Since he owns the brewery, Cornelius makes sure he serves the kind of beer he prefers, which



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CRAFT BEER CRAZE



A RICH, PENNE PASTA DISH AT PIER 22 PAIRS WELL WITH A DARKER BEER, LIKE MOTORWORKS IPA ON TAP.

are more traditional in makeup. “Darwin’s brewmaster, Jorge Rosabal, escaped Cuba with his family and settled in Honduras, but he got his Masters in Brewing in Munich, Germany,” Cornelius explained. “He and I are both ‘purists’ – our pilsner, called Pirata Pils, is brewed with noble hops in accordance with Bavarian tradition.” That is not to say Blue Rooster doesn’t carry beers with different flavors, like Cran-Lemon Witbier. “It tastes really good, almost like a wine.”

The most popular craft beers served at Blue Rooster are, perhaps not coincidentally, Darwin’s biggest sellers: The Summadayze IPA and the Circa 1926 Tangerine Wheat Ale. Both of these pair well with the Blue Rooster’s most popular menu items: low county shrimp and grits and Blue Rooster’s fried chicken and waffle.

Crafting and Pairing at PIER 22

Serving craft beer at PIER 22 enhances the restaurant’s truly unique, waterfront dining experience. “Currently we only have five taps for draught and two carry craft beers,” said Folkins. That will soon change as the bar revamps its system within the next two months, to carry more beer in general and craft beer specifically.

Folkins explained that the principles of pairing food with beer are about balancing weight

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and intensity, contrasting components and bridging flavors. "When pairing craft beer and food dishes, diners can consider a wheat ale like Darwin Circa 1926, which we have on tap, as similar to that of a white wine," he explained. The Circa 1926, for example, goes really well with sushi, salads and fish dishes. He suggested trying it with Pier 22's sunset ship sushi boat, the PIER 22 house salad, or the grouper picatta.

Darker beers, such as the Motorworks IPA that PIER 22 has on tap can be considered more



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akin to a red wine. It can stand up to a heavier flavor food. "This IPA is very versatile. It will go with our PIER 22 burger, our St. Louis ribs and chicken penne pasta in cream sauce," he said.

A Wall of Craft Beer

The company known as Tableside runs quite a few restaurants, but none as craft beer-centric as Oak & Stone in the Lakewood Ranch area. This neighborhood-style beer and pizza joint operates with a really great twist. Food-wise it offers wood-fired artisanal pizza and gourmet tavern fare and on the beer front it has the largest RIFD technology self serve brew wall in the region. It has 56 craft beers to taste and choose and at least 25-29 are from Florida.

"Our philosophy at Oak & Stone is to support the local craft beer scene in every way possible," said Goeser. "We do this not only by purchasing the beer, but having the breweries co-sponsor events with us, and team up to help us inform and educate locals and tourist alike, about the amazing selection of craft beers that Florida has to offer. Ten years ago this was not the case."

It is well known that pizza and beer go together like good friends. Make that beer craft and pizza artisanal and you have a lifelong pairing. And pairing beer with food is big here. "A good rule of thumb when pairing beer and food together is to think about the flavors that engage your palate with the food and find a contrasting beer that will amplify the amount of taste buds that you engage when putting the two together," said Goeser.

When asked why he is such a beer (geek) Goeser explained, "What differentiates craft beer from regular domestics are the stories that are weaved into its preparation. Quite often the final product that you get to drink has within it endless hours of labor, testing, sweat and probably even a few tears that the master brewer invested into the bubbly concoction."



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Brewers' Talk

LEARN ABOUT AREA BREWERIES FROM THE PEOPLE WHO RUN THEM

Passion, commitment and a bit of mad scientist are all qualities that go into being a craft beer brewer. Their beers range from IPAs (India Pale Ales) to sour stouts, and from Belgian-inspired to citrus flavored. We asked these passionate people, who are running local breweries, some questions about the places, the beers and the trends.

Motorworks Brewing

Since opening in 2014, Motorworks Brewing has quickly become one of the most-awarded breweries in Florida with more than 30 national and international medals.

It offers 30 beers on draught, a full liquor bar, an expansive wine collection and a rotating batch of seasonal and specialty brews available in the taproom. Located on the site of a 1923 auto dealership, Motorworks was co-founded by husband and wife team, Frank and Denise Tschida. However, you won't find a more exuberant ambassador than Barry Elwonger. While his official title is Director of Sales and Marketing he fills many roles including Certified Cicerone, Certified Beer Judge (BJCP), and an absolute beer fanatic. Here's Barry...

Q What are Motorworks Brewery's unique features as a destination?

A We were the first craft brewery to open in Bradenton. We are also home to Florida's largest beer garden, where guests can enjoy a beautiful, raised deck surrounding a 150+ year-old oak tree and play games on our more than 12 corn hole sets or bocce ball court.

Q What are your most popular beers?

A Four of our most in-demand products are our flagship, the V Twin Vienna Lager; our intellectual property ale (IPA); Midnight Espresso, which has strong chocolate and coffee notes; and Pulp Friction Grapefruit IPA. We also offer limited editions throughout

BREWERS' TALK

the year and every other week we rotate a tap-room only selection, announced on social media and our website. Two or three times a quarter we do small releases of bottles. So far we have made more than 150 unique beers.

Q What do you feel differentiates a craft beer or brewery from commercial?

A Part of it is independence. We have no outside investors: no big conglomerate is telling us what to do. Thus we are able to focus on each beer's unique character, using high-quality ingredients inspired by our brewers' distinct vision.

Q Craft beer popularity, especially locally, is booming. What do you think is driving that?

A I attribute the rise, firstly, to the quality of the beers themselves and then to consumers' demand for interesting, full-flavored beers to drink. There is also a trend in beer that parallels the food industry: sourcing locally when possible and being involved in our community by helping raise money for area non-profits. Plus the beer is typically fresher than macro-brewed beers.

Q Do you serve food?

A We have a unique take on food. One is a rotating menu of food trucks. The schedule is always posted on our website and we offer all kinds of fare, including authentic German cuisine, BBQ and pizza. The other is our ability to access some of the great local restaurants near us; we have a system where customers order from our service staff. When



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BREWERS' TALK

they place the order, it goes straight from our system to the restaurant and then we bring it out to you.

Q What do customers do for fun at Motorworks, aside from the beer and the games and the TVs, etc.?

A On Friday and Saturday night we always have a band rocking the stage, and often we have additional events and parties going on. It can definitely get lively, but you can always go out to the beer garden or hang in the taproom to relax; we recently started hosting 'Live Stand-Up Comedy' nights as well.

Q What can we anticipate in Motorworks' future?

A We chose our building partly because we have room to grow in it. In fact, we have enough space to expand production capacity to a level that would rival (Tampa's) Cigar City. In the future, we want to continue to expand throughout the region and beyond.

FUN FACTS

- First local brewery to distribute a beer using Florida-grown wet hops.
- Motorworks likes to create beers to go with various events it takes part in. Examples include a beer made with lavender for a flower and garden festival and a carrot-cake beer brewed specially for its anniversary party each January.

Darwin Brewing Company and Tap Room

The Darwin Brewing Company story started in the beginning of 2012 when Chef Darwin Santa Maria opened his namesake restaurant in a Sarasota citrus distribution warehouse dating from the 1920s. Later in that year Bill Cornelius purchased the building and in 2013 launched the Southern-fare, blues music-saturated restaurant, Blue Rooster. However, shortly after the purchase Darwin's resident brewery vacated and left behind its equipment. Long story short, Cornelius hired a brewmaster and began crafting beers to directly pair with Dar-



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BREWERS' TALK

win's Andean cuisine. By 2014 the craft beer operation outgrew that spot and Darwin's Brewery set up shop in Bradenton. Bill hijacked his son, Matt Cornelius, to manage the place. What do you say Matt...?

Q What enticed you to leave Chicago and come to Florida to run a craft brewery?

A I came down with the goal of bringing our craft beers out of the restaurant and into retail establishments. My background includes graduate school and a law degree and I jumped at the chance to join the family business.

Q What are Darwin's unique features as a destination?

A We opened in Bradenton in May of 2014 with 14 taps. We also have an outdoor area with a stage. We brew on site, which isn't unique, but we also have a canning facility on premise. We sell Darwin's beer statewide in kegs or cans. Plus we do a quarterly special limited edition release of bottles of beer.

Q What is distinctive about Darwin's beers?

A What makes our beer unique is that we employ the same culinary practices and elements used in epicurean food to make our beer. We started by brewing beer to pair with the original Darwin's restaurant's most popular menu items. For our braised short ribs, we developed Ayawasca – a malty Belgian that would stand up to the meat and the strong flavors. It is still a pretty popular beer. Then we expanded that concept by having beer-pair-



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BREWERS' TALK



DIANA AND JOE EIBLER'S NAUGHTY MONK BREWERY IS A LABOR OF LOVE.

ing dinners. Just three people showed up for the first one but in a short time we gained traction and momentum. By the time the ball was rolling we sold out the restaurant for a beer dinner where we partnered with Cigar City in Tampa.

Q What are your most popular beers?

A Our year-round choices have been consistent from the beginning. The beer we sell the most of is our Summadayze IPA, which was designed for daily drinking in Florida. Our Circa 1926 pale wheat ale is a warm-weather tangerine/citrus brew.

The two other year-round choices are also popular. They are the Llama Mama Milk Stout and the Pirata Pils, a German pilsner.

FUN FACTS

- Darwin's partners with many area restaurants including Sharky's on the Pier in Venice, The Beach House in Bradenton Beach, and more.
- Pirata means Pirate in Spanish and Darwin's Pirata Pils is named for the team that spring trains at Lecom Park (Mackenzie Field) – the Pittsburgh Pirates.

The Naughty Monk Brewery

The Naughty Monk Brewery's origin story reads just like a follow your dreams fable. Diana Eibler and her husband Joe ordered a home brewing kit and, after trying a number of recipes, were hooked on Belgian-style beers. The two continued brewing on their stovetop in a lobster pot while all around them neighbors and friends were exclaiming "you should sell them," and "I would buy this in a store." After five years of planning, they opened Naughty Monk in November 2016 with a mission 'to brew unforgettable beers and have a place where good friends can connect over a couple of pints.' The couple has three partners now – Eric and Judy Keller and Anthony Martin. Diana stands out though, not just because of her flaming red hair. She is also the Brewery's CEO or, as she likes to be called, its Brew Mistress...

Q What are Naughty Monk Brewery's unique features as a destination?

A We are the first brewery to open in Lakewood Ranch, so the destination itself is unique. Our 8,600 sq. ft. brewery and taproom was built to our design and from the ground up. It features 24 draft handles, the only two Diamond pool tables in Manatee County, darts, cornhole and a variety of games and entertainment. Also, we are located in a shopping plaza, not in an industrial or urban environment. One more thing that is a standout here is our amazing staff. They possess fantastic customer service and I couldn't do what I do without them.





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BREWERS' TALK

Brew Mistress) and Judy Keller is general manager/vice president. "You would be surprised how many women come in and, when they learn I'm CEO they are like, "You go girl!"

Sarasota Brewing Company

The Sarasota Brewing Company opened its doors in 1989 in the Gulf Gate location where it still resides. At the time, multi-screen sports pubs and brewpubs were all the rage across the U.S. but there really weren't any in Sarasota. Enter... a place that is both, a brewpub and a sports restaurant. Current owner, Tony Fricano, moved here from Chicago in 2001. When he came across the opportunity to buy the Sarasota Brewing Co., which was the only one of its kind at the time, he went for it.

Q Who, beside you, are the MVPs at your brewery?

A We're all MVPs here especially our guests. Of course, a brewery wouldn't exist without a brewer. Vince Pelosi has been designing the beers and manning the kettle here for more than eighteen years and our bar/floor manager Rita Daniels has provided quality service for our guests for the entire 28 years of business.

Q What differentiates a craft beer or brewery from commercial?

A Semantics I'd jest, but I'd say it's about independence and the variety of offerings the brewery puts out. Some would argue it's about brewery size, which is partly true because a corporate owned mega-beer factory only works best with limited style while a small independent brewery can easily change or add styles.

Q What makes your craft beer stand out from other places?

A What differentiates us from other breweries in the Sarasota area is we are 28 years in the craft beer business. We have gone through years of trial and error developing consistent recipes our customers keep coming back for, as well as being the only full service family friendly restaurant and brewery.

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Q To what do you attribute craft beer's rise in popularity?

A It's probably about choice. For over a century, the American beer industry got smaller and smaller with larger and larger brewers basically only offering one style of beer to the buying public, the American lager. In our world of satellites and social media it's easy to be exposed to new and different choices and unlike in the past travel is now common exposing more people to different choices including beer styles i.e. craft beer.

Q What are some of your most popular beers?

A After many years of making different types of beer we have whittled our portfolio to offer four, year-round beers and four or five rotating seasonal styles that are one of a kind. Our core beers that keep them coming back are Sarasota Gold (a light golden ale), Sarasota IPA (an amber hop forward ale), Sequoia Amber Lager (a light amber American lager) and Midnight Pass Porter (a dark roasty ale).

Q Do you serve food?

A The Sarasota Brewing Co is a full service restaurant with a great menu. We feature Chicago-style pizza and Italian beef, plus many other items. Burger, wings, steaks, ribs, fish sandwiches and salads just to name a few.

FUN FACT

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