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THE ART OF BREWING: DEVON'S DAMN DELICIOUS BEERS



Devon Randall of Arts District Brewing

Photo by Bernie Wire

One of my most often used mantras in our admittedly spoiled world of insanely good craft beer, is that word of mouth is failsafe. A new brewery opens. You can go check it out for yourself, but you can also just wait to hear the buzz. Or, sadly, the lack of buzz.

Another favorite of mine is to describe our best California brewers as artists, the same as actors, musicians, or painters are artists. Seriously. We enjoy an embarrassment of riches when it comes to talented brewers. (Read full cover story on page 12)

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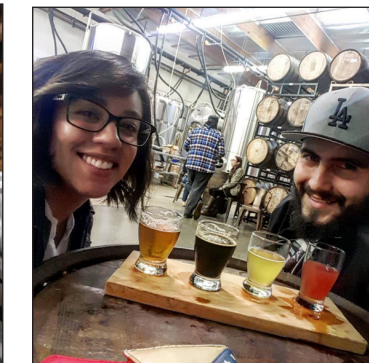
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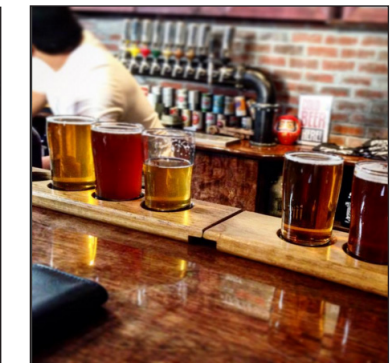
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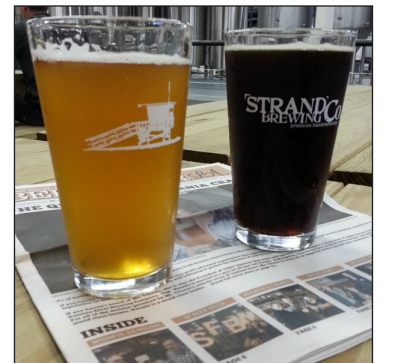
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BREWER'S CORNER

LEARNING CURVE. THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF OPENING A CRAFT BREWERY

By Johnny Johur

Photos courtesy of Artifex

I remember the day my biggest dream became a reality. All of our hard work for months finally culminated on our opening day. Seeing the tasting room crowded with people enjoying the beers we had poured our hearts and souls into made the past months worth every second. Artifex Brewing Co had become a reality. A real, live brewery that before had just been an idea, a concept, a work-in-progress. Having worked for Pizza Port Solana Beach and Mother Earth Brew Co, I knew this was the direction I wanted my life to go in. I was fortunate enough to have had great mentors who gave me a priceless education in brewing but even more importantly taught me the ins and outs of entrepreneurship. After working alongside these professionals and experiencing different ways a brewery can be run, it did not take me long to realize that my goal was to own and operate my own brewery. Even though I worked for several years in the craft beer industry, little did I know what was actually required to make my dream a reality! It's not as easy as one might think. I'll share with you a few pieces of advice that my business partners and I have learned along the way and hopefully they can help you avoid some of the challenges we faced.

Be Patient and Open Minded: Someone in the industry told me early on that you should plan on your project taking double the time and costing twice as much as you originally forecasted. This rang true for us. We had initially projected a 4-6 month search for a highly visible, pedestrian friendly location. Instead we struggled to find suitable spaces, encountered property owners who wouldn't negotiate and lost out in bidding wars. After some time of searching for the space we had envisioned, we opened our minds and found our home in a business park in San Clemente. While it wasn't what we initially had in mind, we couldn't be happier with how it worked out. These same traits can also be important when dealing with permitting and licensing, ordering equipment, and managing construction. There are going to be a few hurdles along the way so be prepared to act quickly and make necessary adjustments.

Do Your Homework: I cannot stress this enough. Even if you think you have all the information there will always be more to learn. You will find yourself in a situation thinking, how is this possible? How did I not think about this? There are so many different things that can be easily overlooked, especially if this is your first go at starting a brewery. Ceiling heights, concrete thickness, sufficient access to utilities, and ADA compatibility can all be issues that arise if you do not do all the necessary research. And that's just on the building end of things. Knowing the proper requirements for labels and packaging, distributing out of state, signing a reasonable lease, and hosting special events can save you lots of time and money down the road. In our case, we were so eager to secure a location that we overlooked the amount of power in our building. The 200 amps on site were not enough to power all of our equipment and as a result we had to upgrade.



This meant shutting down power to the whole business center, running pipe and wire across the length of the building, and installing a brand new 400 amp service. All of this added time and cost which could have been avoided.

Have Deep Pockets: Opening a brewery is not cheap. Sizable up front capital is needed to get things started in most cases. It is easier to plan for big things like a brewhouse and location, but the hardest part is budgeting for the little things. Cooperage, cold storage, ingredients, construction, maintenance, payroll, insurance, and federal and state fees, can all add up real quick. Having spent more than 6 months writing the business plan for Artifex, I know personally that many of these costs are easily overlooked. A business plan is a good start, but unless you have prior experience it might be a good idea to talk to someone already in the industry, which takes us to my final piece of advice.



Ask For Advice: The craft beer industry is like no other out there. Camaraderie and collaboration are ingrained in the majority of us. Whether it's insight on a new brewing technique or the need for a pitch of yeast, most brewers and brewery owners are more than happy to help out. This has proven true for us on many occasions. I have brewed on multiple systems over 6 years but I had never personally gone through the process of ordering one. We were fortunate enough to know people who were happy to share their thoughts, ideas and reasoning for their own brew systems. This advice and knowledge was invaluable and helped us make the most educated decisions we could.


While all this information may seem overwhelming, I decided to share it to help make opening your future breweries a little bit easier. If you are equipped with the knowledge and little industry secrets, it will help out a lot in the end. I would encourage anyone to pursue their dreams, just like I did. However, it is imperative to be aware of all that is required to be successful. Opening a brewery definitely has its challenges but just like anything else in life, it is all worth the hard work when so many people enjoy the "hops" of your labor.

Johnny Johur has brewed for Pizza Port Solana Beach and Mother Earth Brew Co. over the last 6 years. He is currently an owner and head brewer at Artifex Brewing Company in San Clemente.

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WISHFUL DRINKING

WHO SAID YOU CAN NEVER GO HOME AGAIN? LA'S NEWEST BREWERIES RETURN TO WHERE IT ALL STARTED

By Tomm Carroll

Downtown LA's Arts District has developed into the hip new area for galleries, bars and restaurants. Not surprisingly, as this issue of BPLA makes clear, it's also a magnet destination for the city's newest wave of craft breweries coming online, largely due to its relatively reasonable real estate costs.

The time-honored adage, "Everything Old is New Again," comes into play here. And I don't just mean the first of the modern breweries to set up shop there, Angel City.

In a nutshell: Pissed off at his landlords at Alpine Village in the Torrance area, former Angel City owner and brewmaster Michael Bowe dismantled and moved his brewery (which he brought in 2004 from the previous owner on eBay) into storage in 2009. He found a new location, the historic John A. Roebling building on South Alameda St. near Traction, and moved the brewery there the following year. In spring 2011, he opened Angel City's taproom, serving beer he had made in Torrance, but never brewed a drop of beer at the new location. By early 2012, Alchemy and Science, a wholly owned subsidiary of Boston Beer Company (Samuel Adams), purchased the brewery. It kept the Angel City moniker, but began brewing its own beers, and officially opened in late spring 2013.

I'm talking about waay back, some 160 years ago. What is now the Arts District, and the neighboring Boyle Heights area, are some of the oldest sections of this then-tiny little town that grew from the original El Pueblo near Olvera Street. In 1850, the population of the city of Los Angeles was only 1,600 (not a typo). The city's earliest breweries (1854 is the oldest on record) originated very close to where downtown's current crop of craft breweries is located.

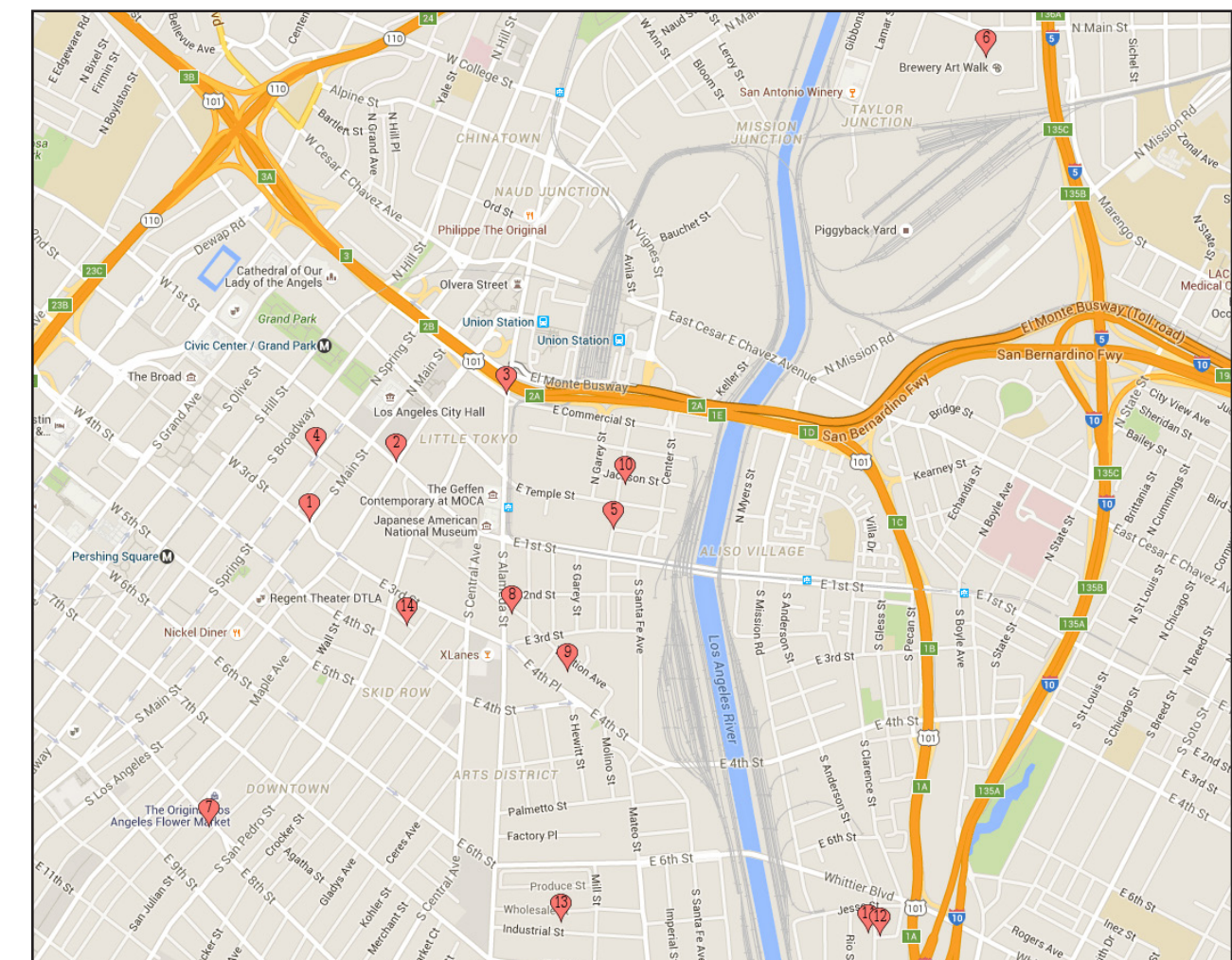
Longtime BPLA readers may recall historical articles on some of these pioneering breweries from my erstwhile "Los Angeles, BC (Before Craft)" column.

Despite its geographically confusing name, the New York Brewery (1854-1887), was LA's first, located at 20 3rd St. at Main. Just a few blocks away, Gambrinus opened in 1856 at 1st St. and Los Angeles, where the Double Tree Hilton Downtown sits today. In 1874, Gambrinus got a new owner, a new name (City Brewery and Saloon) and a new location even closer to NY Brewery: the corner of 2nd St. and Spring (near today's LA Times building), before it closed in 1875.

In 1873, another location-challenged-named facility, the Philadelphia Brewery, launched not far from Union Station on the former site of vineyards at 440 Aliso St. at what is now North Alameda St., and over the years extended east along Commercial St. to Vignes. One of the longer-lived early breweries, it eventually became Zobelein & Maier, Maier Brewing, ABC Brewing and General Brewing (and making "Brew 102" along the way) before it shuttered in the mid-1970s. The brewery itself was finally demolished in 1985 for the construction of the El Monte Busway.

The short-lived United States Brewery followed in 1878, setting up shop at 26 Banning St., close to what would become the Arts District. Although that address no longer exists, Banning is only two blocks from Jackson Street, where the new Boomtown Brewery is located. It was also not far from where Arts District Brewing, Angel City and Mumford Brewing are today. After changing its moniker to the name of its proprietor, Fred Binder, the US Brewery folded in 1884.

LA finally got its own namesake brewery in the waning years of the 19th century when the Los Angeles Brewery opened in 1897-98, all the way on the east side of the LA River at 1920 North Main St. Within 30 years, the area became known as "East Los Angeles" (now Lincoln Heights), considered LA's first suburb. The facility, which went on to become Eastside, Zesto Beverage and finally Pabst Brewing until the end of



Historic Breweries

- 1: New York Brewery (1854-87), 20 3rd St. & Main
- 2: Gambrinus (1856-74), 1st St. and Los Angeles
- 3: Philadelphia Brewery (Zobelein & Maier, ABC Brewing, General Brewing) (1873-1974), 440 Aliso St.
- 4: City Brewery and Saloon (1874-75), 2nd St. & Spring
- 5: United States Brewery (Fred Binder Brewery) (1878-84) 26 Banning St.
- 6: Los Angeles Brewery (Eastside, Zesto Beverage, Pabst) (1897-1979), 1920 North Main St.
- 7: Gorky's Café and Russian Brewery (1988-1993) 536 East 8th St. at San Julian

New Breweries

- 8: Angel City Brewery (opened 2013), 216 South Alameda St.
- 9: Arts District Brewing (opened 2016), 828 Traction Ave.
- 10: Boomtown Brewing (opened 2015), 700 Jackson St.
- 11: Dry River Brewing (opened 2015), 671 South Anderson St.
- 12: Indie Brewing (opened 2015), 2318 Sunrise St.
- 13: Iron Triangle Brewing (opened 2016), 1581 Industrial St.
- 14: Mumford Brewing (opened 2015), 416 Boyd St.

the 1970s, is the oldest local brewery to still have part of its buildings still standing; it is currently the Brewery Arts Colony and Artists Lofts.

While brewing at the location ceased in 1979, destination craft beer bar Barbara's at the Brewery has continued the beer legacy of this historic site as a centerpiece of the artists colony for 17 years now.

Last year, two new breweries, Dry River and Indie, also opened just east of the LA River in Boyle Heights, but much farther south than the Brewery Arts Colony — close to where the 5, 10, 60 and 101 freeways converge.

Even the first brewpub in downtown LA since Prohibition — the pioneering Gorky's Café and Russian Brewery, which began brewing in 1988 (six years after brewpubs were

legalized in California) — opened at 536 East 8th St. at San Julian, not very far from the new Iron Triangle Brewery in the Arts District. Gorky's closed in 1993. It is now the Casa Blanca Flower Shop.

While many of the owners of downtown's new breweries and their fans may not even realize it, they are literally returning to their beer-making and beer-consuming roots, bringing the local craft beer movement back to the hallowed ground upon which it was born, over a century and a half ago. Cheers to coming full circle!

In *Wishful Drinking*, Tomm Carroll opines and editorializes on trends, issues and general perceptions of the local craft beer movement and industry, as well as beer history. Feel free to let him know what you think (and drink); send comments, criticisms, kudos and even questions to beerscribe@earthlink.net.



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GRAND OPENING

BROUWERIJ WEST OPENS IN SAN PEDRO

by Sarah Bennett

Brouwerij West, one of L.A. County's first craft beer brands, finally has a space to call its own.

After contract brewing at everywhere from Bayhawk in Irvine to Hermitage in San Jose for the last six years, founder/owner/brewmaster Brian Mercer is now making innovative Belgian-style beers out of a 72-year-old abandoned shipping warehouse in the Port of Los Angeles.

Brouwerij West ("brouwerij" means "brewery" in Flemish and is pronounced the same) landed in San Pedro, Mercer's hometown, after a search that led them from El Segundo to Long Beach. The building, which shares a parking lot with artisanal swap meet Crafted, is 100 feet from the water and features exposed rafters and an open-air brewhouse with views of blue skies and palm trees.

Inside, Brouwerij West has created one of the most eco-friendly breweries in L.A., anchored by a new state-of-the-art 17-barrel system, purchased with the help from a City of L.A. green-business grant. On the other side of the warehouse is a serious water filtration system that Mercer hopes one day he can replace with a full desalination plant.

Next to the brewhouse is a shiny piece of steel that looks like an oversized wort chiller, but is actually a mash filter, which helps them achieve 98 percent efficiency with its sugar extraction. Though the 20-foot-long machine is new, mash filtering technology goes back to brewing's old days and Mercer says many breweries in Belgium – including Rodenbach and Chimay – still use one.

The whole brewery runs off of a 1 gigawatt solar panel system on the roof. It donates any excess energy generated back to the grid.

"In a cool way, not only do we get to use this old technology but we also save money on malt, water and energy," he says.

First batches of Brouwerij West beer (on tap now in the tasting room) include several familiar Belgian-style beers from their contract brewing days, including the tripel, the quad (Mør Mør) and Dog Ate My Homework, a blackberry saison. First Rodeo, the brewery's first Brett beer which was a seasonal release three years ago, has also been re-created with the new brewery.

But more exciting than the old beers are the new ones.

By using a mash filter instead of a lauter run, Brouwerij West is able to experiment with a variety of grains too sticky or thick for most breweries' systems. He also buys specialty grains from two small farms in the Pacific Northwest. This means beers like the 100 percent sour wheat beer currently on draft, and a 55 percent buckwheat beer, in fermenters now.

"With this setup, we can do so many interesting things," Mercer says. "We're still chasing recipes and seeing what works."

Brouwerij West is the manifestation of Mercer's years spent importing hard-to-find Belgian candy sugar (a "secret ingredient" in many Trappist

Photo by Sarah Bennett



beers), which found him traveling often between the U.S. and the historic beer-producing country. When he started homebrewing 10 years ago, he couldn't help but be influenced by the breweries he visited on these business trips.

Through his connections in Belgium, he made friends with the owners of Shelton Brothers beer importers, which last year brought some of the best craft brewers from all over the world to SoCal as part of The Festival which took place at the Crafted/Brouwerij West complex.

"I couldn't ask for a better brewery," Mercer says. "We're on the water, we're in Southern California, it's a green brewery and I get to do cool, interesting beers."

Brouwerij West, 110 E 22nd St, San Pedro; (310) 833-9330; bwla.beer

Sarah Bennett is a freelance journalist living and working in Long Beach. Follow her @thesarahbennett.

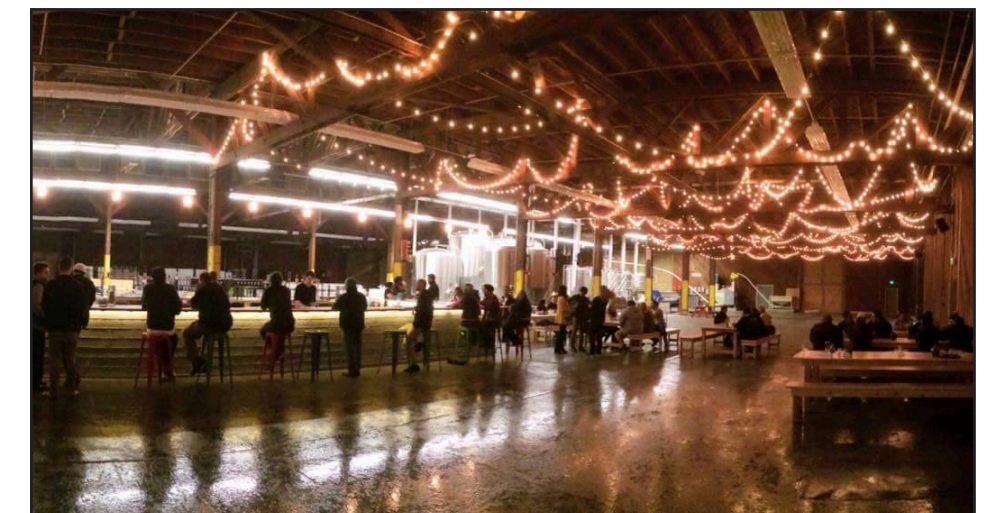


Photo courtesy of Brouwerij West

COVER STORY

THE ART OF BREWING: DEVON'S DAMN DELICIOUS BEERS

By Daniel Drennon



Devon Randall of Arts District Brewing

Photo by Bernie Wire

One of my most often used mantras in our admittedly spoiled world of insanely good craft beer, is that word of mouth is failsafe. A new brewery opens. You can go check it out for yourself, but you can also just wait to hear the buzz. Or, sadly, the lack of buzz.

Another favorite of mine is to describe our best California brewers as artists, the same as actors, musicians, or painters are artists. Seriously. We enjoy an embarrassment of riches when it comes to talented brewers.

One illustration of my word of mouth theory is Devon Randall. I heard about Ms. Randall when she started winning awards and critical acclaim as the head brewer at Pizza Port Solana Beach. When I followed the buzz southbound to try her beers myself, they were predictably delicious. Make that damn delicious. Word of mouth. Failsafe. Brewers as artists. Yes, they are.

The respected 213 Hospitality Group and Mr. Brian Lenzo, one of LA's craft beer trailblazers as the owner Blue Palms Brewhouse in Hollywood, convinced Ms. Randall to come north (and back home) to be the head brewer at the brand spanking new Arts District Brewing Company (ADBC). And not surprisingly, Ms. Randall's opening beers were, each and every one, consistently excellent. She is putting the art in Arts District Brewing.

The brewery itself, located in downtown LA, is beautiful and features skee ball, ping pong, darts, corn hole and board games. ADBC is part arcade, offers spirits, but most of all, is 100% Devon Randall. The ambience is awesome, it's a cool stage, but make no mistake that Devon Randall is the star of the show.

I sat down with Ms. Randall, who grew up here on the Westside, to find out how she arrived at her place among the best brewers in California.

Drennon: Where were you born and raised?

Randall: I was born in Virginia, but grew up in Santa Monica since the age of one. My family and most of my friends have since moved east, so I consider Downtown LA and the Eastside home now.

What were you into as a kid?

I played the cello in the school orchestra, rode dressage on weekends, was Captain of my high school track team for two years, and started my own mini-business tutoring Algebra and Geometry. I wasn't one of the cool kids, but I was content being busy. As a little kid, I was a HUGE tomboy.

What did you first want to be?

I wanted to be a veterinarian. It seems ironic now as I have no pets except a poorly trained cat I found on the street.

How and when did you discover craft beer?

When I turned 21, I worked at a beer bar/restaurant in Berkeley called Raleigh's. They had 20 taps, including Bud, Coors, etc, but also had some great beers on tap, like Bear Republic Racer 5, Sierra Nevada Pale Ale, Stone IPA, and Anchor Steam. My first love was Big Sky's Moose Drool Brown Ale. I remember the moment that I decided I would drink nothing else.

How and when did you decide you wanted to be a brewer?

As many things do, this realization came to me suddenly. I was fresh out of a bad breakup, unsatisfied with my job in real estate sales and marketing, and barely affording my apartment. I was unhappy with the direction of my life. As a result of these stresses, I had a 'quarter-life crisis' meltdown situation. In an attempt to get myself together, I got really, really busy. I filled every night of the week pursuing hobbies like taking sewing classes, joining a swimming and running club, going to salsa classes, and really throwing myself into homebrewing and my homebrew club, Pacific Gravity in Culver City.

The despair finally lifted, and I could handle being in a room alone by myself without breaking into tears, but the brewing remained. I filled my nights and weekends with it, and I yearned for more. I had some doubts, but the seed of the idea of brewing professionally had been planted.

What was your first brewing job?

Logically I started looking for a brewing job close to home. Ting and Jeremy at Eagle Rock Brewery, who are now dear friends, were kind enough to listen to me and try my homebrew, but had just opened doors and had no budget for a staff yet. With no public tasting room, Craftsman in Pasadena was illusive. There were not a lot of options in LA, so I headed to San Diego.

Lost Abbey was the first brewery that let me volunteer for a full brew day. I think my enrollment in the Beer Judge Certification Program (thanks, Carl Townsend!) with Pacific Gravity helped me get my foot in the door. And once I was in, I did everything I could to get people there to want me around more. I took out trash, swept glass, cleaned bathrooms, and helped with anything else I could get my hands on. People started showing me how to do more things like keg off bright tanks and build orders for distro. Eventually, I was hired!

Take us through your career ladder as a brewer.

I started at Lost Abbey in the warehouse and bottling line, moved into the cellar, and eventually ran 'special projects,' including brewer relief, filler operator, barrel management and assisting in blending with Tomme Arthur and Gwen Conley, making firkins, and all sorts of fun tasks. Then I trained under Yiga Miyashiro at Pizza Port Ocean Beach, who taught me the finer points on the brewstand. I took over Pizza Port Solana Beach and was allowed to do my own thing. There I won a GABF bronze for Oatmeal Stout in '13, a WBC bronze for Imperial Porter in '14, a silver at the '14 Bistro IPA competition, and a gold at the '15 Bistro IPA competition. I've been here as Head Brewer at Arts District Brewing since May '15. We started brewing in October '15 and opened in December.

Do you consider anyone as a mentor and/or who inspired you?

Gordon Gerski, packaging manager at Lost Abbey, taught me a lot about staying true to myself, how deeply romantic beer is, and reminded me to have fun along the way.

Tell me about Arts District Brewing Company. How did it happen?

Cedd Moses of 213 Hospitality, Eric Needleman of the Spirited Group, and Brian Lenzo of Blue Palms Brewhouse are the minds behind ADBC. It's a very unique setup and operation, marrying spirits, hospitality, and beer.

Do you, ADBC, have specific goals?

What I love about ADBC is that quality comes first. There is an incredibly passionate team behind ADBC, Dave Ziolkowski – Assistant Brewer, Jesse Corona – General Manager, Ralph DiTucci – Neighborhood Bars Manager, and Steven Zacharian – Bar Manager, working their tails off to show our guests the best time possible. My goals are to supply the best possible beer that I can, provide an innovative and unique experience here and to embrace our community and our city.

What do you love about brewing?

I love that whatever I'm feeling on a particular day, I can go in that direction. If I want to be experimental, artistic, delve into mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, or get organizational with excel, inventory, scheduling, finance, etc, I can do any of those things and more. I can be social and give tours or teach the staff, or get reclusive and be alone in the cellar. Brewing makes me feel like a kid with a world full of possibilities in front of me.

What do you hate about brewing?

Getting grain dust up my nose. You get horrible black boogers after milling a porter or a stout and it really affects your pallet.

What do you like to do when you're not brewing?

Running and hiking are my favorite non-brewing activities. LA has some great trails! I also love to visit other breweries, whether in my own city or in my travels.

What one or two words would you use to describe yourself?

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SPOTLIGHT

RIIP BEER COMPANY: IF BEER DELIVERY IS WRONG; WE DON'T WANT TO BE RIGHT!

By Allison Foley

Some said Ryan Rasmussen and brother in law Ryan Hopkins were nuts, but we think those guys were just jealous. Riip Beer Company didn't have billions when they started, in fact they didn't even have any background knowledge of the craft brewing industry. They had a bit of cash, a hobby and a whole ton of confidence. Rasmussen explains that Riip happened exactly the way he wanted. "I purposely wanted to be small and grow from the ground up. To really experience that piece of the business is huge because when you look back, people respect that. They say I remember when those guys were in that tiny little shack and now look at them!" Rasmussen owns an advertising agency and credits Magnolia Brewing in San Francisco and Ballast Point in San Diego with turning him into a beer guy. "There was a time in my life when I hated beer!" Rasmussen exclaimed. When he purchased a kit from Ballast Point's home brewing supply shop, the tinkering began. This led to the two Ryans going in on a Brew Sculpture which, according to Rasmussen is "the Holy Grail of home brewing systems." It consists of 3 twenty-gallon pots. One fateful day in March 2014, they, along with buddies Spencer Colman and Mike Baccaro, made their first batch, and after lots of practice, it seemed like a viable business idea.



Ian Frailey (tasting room manager), Ryan Rasmussen (owner/founder), Billy Robbins (tasting room manager)

The beloved Brew Sculpture was moved to a small warehouse in Huntington Beach. It was at this point they got their Small Beer Manufacturer's License. This allowed them to brew and sell, but there wasn't enough money coming in yet to open a brick and mortar location. When their ABC rep came to warehouse, she asked to see the brewing system for inspection, and they pointed to small Brew Sculpture in the corner. They were approved anyway and have been inspiring tiny breweries like them to take that same step. "No one was crazy enough to do that and we were," says Rasmussen proudly. From here, Rasmussen and Hopkins's insane investment plan was about to get even more so.

feel." He encourages his employees to come out from behind the bar, offering to serve customers asap. But what are patrons drinking there? Riip's IPA-heavy lineup includes staples like Dan K IPA, the only beer they bottle currently, and a 1st place winner at Taste of HB. Along with other IPAs like Neltra and Citra Bomb, a saison and a Mexican chocolate stout were on tap when we stopped in. The tasting room also includes a home brew supply store selling a small amount of equipment, and basic staples like hops and grain. The tasting room has been open since October 2015, but that's still the tip of the iceberg for this ambitious nano brewery.

Enter...the beer delivery plan. Says Rasmussen, "The only way we were able to sell our beer was through delivery. When we got our license initially, we didn't have the money to pay for the permits that the city wanted us to have (to open a tasting room)." Their attorney advised that they could deliver to homes and businesses. They acquired a vintage 1931 Helms bakery truck formerly used by HB business Brewbakers, and began delivering to restaurants, liquor stores and residences.

Rasmussen wants to expand into the empty storefront next door and do food. He is inspired by Pizza Port's setup. "I think it's a genius business model," he says. Rasmussen has 2 kids, so he can appreciate the idea of a family oriented place where there's something for everyone. But before we see a Riip Pizza Company, Rasmussen would like to get a bigger warehouse and larger brewing system as well as focus on distribution. Riip beer is currently at local liquor stores and on tap in local restaurants, Landmark Liquor and BT's BBQ.

Fast forward to today, the brilliant delivery plan brought in enough revenue to increase production levels, upgrade to a larger brewing system and land that fancy new tasting room in a prime location across PCH from the ocean. Of their new location, Rasmussen states, "I want people served the second they walk in. I'd rather run out, give you a beer and say we'll deal with the payment later." He doesn't like the typical tasting room vibe of standing in a line and prefers his tasting room have a "more hang out, loungey


Come see for yourself which of their brews 'Riips' the most! 17214 Pacific Coast Highway, Huntington Beach, CA 92649 714-248-6710 www.riipbeer.com

Allison Foley has been a CA resident for 33 years and a craft beer enthusiast for twelve. She currently resides in Huntington Beach. Her work has appeared online at se7enmag.com and mainandpch.com, and in print in Performer and Zero magazines.

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HOME BREWER'S CORNER

THE 2015 CALIFORNIA STATE HOMEBREW CLUB OF THE YEAR

By Ryan Penrod

This February, Anchor Brewing Company hosted a luncheon and award presentation for the 2015 California State Homebrew Club of the Year, Strand Brewers Club. Homebrewers from San Francisco to San Diego were present as Anchor opened their taproom and brew house, providing a unique opportunity to tour the brewery at our leisure.

The Anchor brewery is a traditional brewhouse with beautiful handmade copper mash and lauter tuns, a copper brew kettle, and stainless steel "coolship" fermenters that were once open to the elements on the roof of the brewery, but are now enclosed in sealed rooms that are ventilated with filtered air. The taproom has memorabilia such as old bottles of beer lining the bar, beer steins, and pictures recording the brewery's history. Anchor brewing staff was on hand to answer questions about the brew house while delicious beer flowed freely. I was honored to accept the California State Homebrew Club of the Year award with good friends, Bob Wilson, our 2016 president, and Rives Borland, Strand Brewers Club President from 2012 to 2013.

The California State Homebrew Club of the Year award is presented by Anchor Brewing Company every year. Judging criteria include club performance in three large homebrew competitions (Mayfaire, California State Homebrew Competition, and the California State Fair Homebrew Competition), club civic outreach and events, and club member accomplishments. Strand Brewers Club met these criteria with a significant portion of club members who are official beer judges, good competition results, and an eventful year.

While Strand Brewers Club has many accomplished members and many club members are BJCP (Beer Judge Certification Program) judges, two club members have the distinction of being highly ranked judges. Jim Wilson is a Grand Master III judge and has hosted many judge training sessions. Rives Borland is a National judge and a mead judge. These two club members offer many learning opportunities for Strand Brewers Club members to train their palates and improve their beer evaluation skills. Club members entered and placed in a number of competitions this year, including a third place best of show at Mayfaire, and a third place medal for brettanomyces beers at the 2015 Pacific Brewers Cup. This second beer, a pale beer aged in a chardonnay barrel with brettanomyces, was the club's second barrel collaboration. Our first collaboration started five years ago with a strong dark beer aged in a cabernet barrel. These barrel collaborations involve filling a 60 gallon wine barrel with beer brewed by about ten club members, adding yeast and bacteria to sour the beer, and allowing the barrel to influence the beer's flavor as it ages. Barrel collaborations are a great activity for homebrew clubs because it is hard for a single homebrewer to fill a 60 gallon barrel.



Three Strand Brewers Club Presidents: Rives Borland (2012-2013), Bob Wilson (2016), and Ryan Penrod (2014-15) with the homebrew club of the year trophy



Henry Nguyen, owner of Monkish, discussing his brewing process (on the left)



Strand Brewers club collaborates with and supports the larger craft beer and homebrewing community. In September of 2015, we hosted the Pacific Brewers Cup, one of southern California's larger homebrew competitions. The 2015 competition, which had almost 500 entries, was held at the Four Points Sheraton LAX, a luxury normally reserved for the National Homebrewers Competition (the largest homebrew competition in the world). Prizes included four Pro-Am brewing opportunities awarded to competition winners. In June, we co-hosted a 'monster brew' with Monkish Brewing Company in Torrance. A 'monster brew' is a brewing session at a commercial brewery where unfermented wort is sold to participants to be fermented into beer. Monster brews are a great way to experience a commercial brewing system and learn from a professional brewer.



Some of the homebrew at the February club meeting

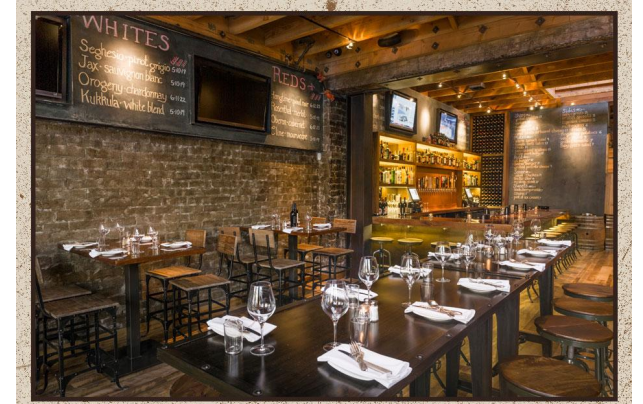
Strand Brewers Club holds meetings on the second Wednesday of every month at South Bay Brewing Supply in Torrance. Every meeting has an educational topic, food, and of course home brewed beer. Recent topics have included tasting the same pale ale recipe with over twelve different dry hop variations, a hands on tutorial in blending beers, a slideshow of a Belgium beer tour, and a triangle tasting beer test featured on brulosophy.com. We have a friendly in club Iron Brewer competition, which takes its inspiration from the Iron Chef television show, three times a year. Each entry must feature the three selected ingredients for that month. The winner gets bragging rights and the temporary possession of the "Iron Brewer" trophy. The club also has a number of social events every year, including parties, a monthly social meet-up at local breweries, and we pour homebrew at the Southern California Homebrewers Festival.



Strand Brewers with the homebrew club of the year trophy

This year, 2016, marks the 25th anniversary of Strand Brewers Club. The club was founded in 1991 by Pete Chin Sang and five of his friends, with the motto 'Brewing the Best Damn Beer'. While Pete is no longer with us, his inviting spirit and enthusiasm for brewing education remain the club's foundation, and a toast in his name marks the start of every club meeting. Strand Brewers Club had a great 2015 and was recognized as the 2015 California State Homebrew Club of the Year, but Strand Brewers Club is not the only homebrew club around. The Maltose Falcons, the oldest homebrew club in America, has earned the award eight times. Pacific Gravity in Culver City and Long Beach Homebrew Club are also past winners. Yeastside in East Los Angeles and Toaked in Thousand Oaks are other great clubs in the area. If you are a homebrewer who isn't in a club, get to a meeting and see what you are missing.

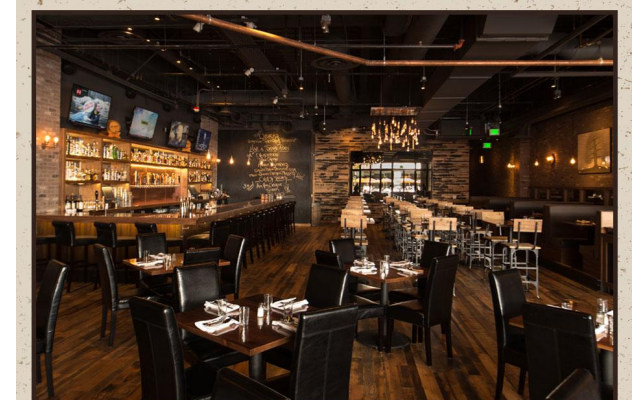
Ryan Penrod has homebrewed for over five years. He was president of Strand Brewers Club in 2014 and 2015.



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DFD ABOUT TOWN

THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES OF LA'S MOST INFAMOUS CRAFT BEER DRINKER

by Daniel Drennon

February is birthday month for me. It is also the month in which Pliny the Younger makes it's annual appearance. These two facts combine to make for four weeks of non-stop drinking that are hazardous to my health...and my marriage. Feb 2016 has taken such a toll that the goal (dare to dream) is to take March and April "off" from the exploits that feed this column. We'll see how that goes.

So without further ado, here are the highlights from the month that was.

February 5 - Power Plant Release Party at El Segundo Brewing. The hop magicians at ESBC released their killer triple IPA, Power Plant, to a packed house. I could rave about the beer but I'll just tell you that the very next day it won the highly coveted gold medal for triple IPAs at the Bistro IPA Festival in Hayward. ESBC had taken the DIPA gold for Hammerland in 2015.

February 8 - Three Weavers Dinner at Ragin' Cajun
Speaking of the Bistro Festival, Alexandra Nowell and Three Weavers claimed fourth place for her The Knotty DIPA (out of 94 entries). Since Three Weavers opened, her beers have been consistently fantastic across the board. Steve and Corey at Ragin' Cajun hosted she and her crew for a Mardi Gras week beer dinner. If you want a taste of New Orleans sans the four-hour plane ride, check these guys out. My mother hailing from Morehead City, North Carolina - where they bring the shrimp right off the boat into the kitchen - I can tell you the fried shrimp at Ragin' Cajun is as good as it gets on the left coast. Add gumbo, jambalaya, fried okra and hushpuppies and this Southern boy is so happy.



With Bernie Wire at ESBC Power Plant Release

February 20 - Noble 5th Anniversary Party
Five years! Time flies when you're making some of the best damn beer this side of... anywhere. Evan Price brews Noble. He sings. He dances. He and his brew crew are our Monty Python troupe - always entertaining. Always delivering beer that has fans raving.

February 21 - Pliny the Younger Brunch at Haven Gastropub in Orange
Wil Dee and Greg Daniels host a few hundred people each year for a 9 am brunch featuring the beer that shall not be named, oops, it's the beer that cannot be found. You get a full pour of Younger with six chasers of other phenomenal Russian River beers. Greg's food is superb and Haven gets it just right. Beer tip of the month: Dee is also close to opening Chapman Crafted with super brewer Brian Thorson (formerly of Haven, Drake's and Trumer among others). Trust me when I tell you set your expectations high for Chapman Crafted. Thorson is legit.

February 22 - Pliny the Younger release at Tustin Brewing Company
TBC turns twenty this year, effectively making Jason Jerolds a fucking pioneer when it comes to the OC beer scene. Natalie Cilurzo, aka the Queen of California Craft, aka Vinnie's better half, and the reigning President of the California Craft Brewers Association, was in the house. Now for LA beer fans, I know, you're saying, "where the fuck is Tustin?" Well, Google it and go because Younger or no Younger, Jerrod Larsen is brewing some damn fine beers at TBC.

February 23 - Pliny the Younger at Simmzy's in Manhattan Beach
Bars handle Younger in many different ways. Haven does the killer brunch. Beachwood raises \$11,000 for charity with a raffle. Quite a few joints do it like Simmzy's where they just put it on like any other beer on a random weekday. The prevailing theory of this strategy is that the bar's regulars will get it as a perk and not a long line of Younger hunters who show up to get it and are never seen again. So if you are lucky enough to be a regular at one of these bars or lucky enough to get that special text, this is the way to drink PtY. Side note: This year's Younger, like every year's Younger, would get a 100 on Rate Beer or an A Plus in any class. I am always bemused overhearing folks saying "it's not as good this year." WTF?!?! It's just that a lot of other breweries are making equally excellent TIPAs these days.



Noble 5th Anniversary Party



Birthday lunch at Beachwood

February 24 - Acid Trip and Firestone Walker Tap Takeover at Naja's
Jeffers Richardson, aka The Bad Ass Barrelmeister of Barrelworks, conducted a one-man symposium in the art of brewing and tasting wild ales. Seriously, I felt like I was in a chem class at Cal (Jeffers is a Bear...wait, I thought Adam was the Bear). Leave it to Big Jay and Kara at Naja's to turn the hallowed Blue Room into a classroom and then segue right into a ridiculously impressive FW tap takeover featuring the Barrelworks wild ales, three years of FW Anniversary brews, and Parabola just to name a few. Naja's is also one of the joints at which Younger comes and goes with no fanfare.



Barrelmeister Jeffers Richardson preaches and teaches at Naja's

February 25 - DFD Birthday Party and Knee Deep Tap Takeover at Brew Kitchen
My favorite new beer bar of 2015 is Brew Kitchen in Los Alamitos. Owner/chef Joe Maggiore's food is delicious and he offers 28 craft taps. Joe is a huge Knee Deep fan as am I. So when he told me he was bringing in 12 taps of KD around my bday, I had no choice but to co-opt the occasion. Breaking Bud may well have been my favorite beer of 2015 - God knows I drank about 10,000 gallons of it at Joe's place. It drinks like a session IPA, but weighs in at a perfect 6.5 abv. Knee Deep's double and triples also shine.

February 27 - Barbara's at the Brewery 17th Anniversary Party
If you have followed my exploits at all, you know that Barbara's is one of my home spots and that Erik Huig is one of my best pals. Everything about Barbara's is great - from one of the best tap lists in the city, to the food, to the staff, the three outdoor patios...I could go on and on. If you are a beer fan and have not been to Barbara's...why the Hell not? Yes, Erik gets Younger and consistently has Russian River, Beachwood, Craftsman, Highland Park, and Noble just to name drop a few. And even though he has always killed it with just 15 taps, he just installed his own state-of-the-art draft system and now has 20 taps. Just do what I tell you and check this place out. Tell them DFD sent you. Erik will love (hate) that!



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www.dryriverbrewing.com

Eagle Rock Brewery
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eaglerockbrewery.com

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elsegundobrewing.com

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goldenroad.la

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King Harbor Brewing Company
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kingharborbrewing.com

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La Verne Brewing
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lavernebrewingco.com

MacLeod Ale Brewing
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macleodale.com

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Mumford Brewing
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ohanabrew.com

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paccitybrewery.com

Pacific Plate Brewing
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pacificplatebrewing.com

Phantom Carriage Brewing
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phantomcarriage.com

Progress Brewing
1822 Chico Ave, South El Monte
progress-brewing.com

REV Brewing
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revbrew.com

Sanctum Brewing Company
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sanctumbrewing.com

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The Dudes' Brewing Company
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sanpedrobrewing.com

The Lab Brewing Co.
30105 Agoura Rd, Agoura Hills
labbrewingco.com

Wolf Creek Restaurant & Brewing
27746 McBean Pkwy, Santa Clarita
wolfcreekbrewing.com

Orange County

BREWERIES

Anaheim Brewery
336 S Anaheim Blvd, Anaheim
anaheimbrew.com

Artifex Brewing
919 Calle Amanacer, San Clemente
artifexbrewing.com

Back Street Brewery
1884 S Santa Cruz St, Anaheim
backstreetbrew.com

Barley Forge Brewing
2957 Randolph Ave, Costa Mesa
barleyforge.com

Bootlegger's Brewery
130 S Highland Ave, Fullerton
bootleggersbrewery.com

Bottle Logic Brewing
1072 N Armando St, Anaheim
bottlelogic.com

Cismontane Brewing Company
29851 Aventura #D,
Rancho Santa Margarita
cismontanebrewing.com

Evans Brewing
2000 Main St, Irvine
evanslager.com

Four Sons Brewing
18421 Gothard St, Huntington Beach
foursonsbrewing.com

Left Coast Brewing Company
1245 Puerta Del Sol, San Clemente
leftcoastbrewing.com

Noble Ale Works
1621 S. Sinclair St. #B, Anaheim
noblealeworks.com

Old Orange Brewing Co.
1444 N. Batavia St, Orange
oldorangebrewing.com

Phantom Ales
1211 Las Brisas St, Anaheim
phantomales.com

Riip Beer Company
17214 Pacific Coast Highway
Huntington Beach, riipbeer.com

The Bruery
715 Dunn Way, Placentia
thebruery.com

The Good Beer Co.
309 W 4th St, Santa Ana
thegoodbeerco.com

Towne Park Brew Co
19191 Lawrence Cyn, Silverado
Towneparkbrew.com

Valiant Brewing Co.
2294 N Batavia St #C, Anaheim
valiantbrewing.com

BREW PUBS

Brewbakers
7242 Heil Ave, Huntington Beach
brewbakers1.com

Huntington Beach Beer Company
201 Main St, Huntington Beach
hbbeerco.com

Newport Beach Brewing Company
2920 Newport Blvd, Newport Beach
newportbeachbrewingcompany.com

Ocean Avenue Brewery
237 Ocean Ave, Laguna Beach
oceanbrewing.com

Pizza Port San Clemente
301 N El Camino Real, San Clemente
pizzaport.com

Stadium Brewing
26738 Aliso Creek Rd, Aliso Viejo
stadiumbrewing.com

TAPS Fish House & Brewery
101 E Imperial Hwy, Brea, CA
tapsfishhouse.com

TAPS Fish House & Brewery
13390 Jamboree Rd, Irvine, CA
tapsfishhouse.com

Tustin Brewing Company
13011 Newport Ave #100, Tustin
tustinbrewery.com

Inland Empire

BREWERIES

3 Iron Brewing Co.
898 Via Lata #A, Colton
3ironbrewing.com

Aftershock Brewing Co.
28822 Old Town Front St #108,
Temecula
atershockbrewingco.com

Area 51 Craft Brewery
7123 Arlington Ave #A, Riverside
Area51craftbrewery.com

Black Market Brewing Co.
41740 Enterprise Cir N #109
Temecula
blackmarketbrew.com

Brew Crew Inc.
11626 Sterling Ave #G, Riverside
brewcrewinc.com

Brew Rebellion Brewing
13444 California St, Yucaipa
brewrebellion.com

Bulldog Brewery
41379 Date St #B, Murietta
bulldog-brewery.com

Chino Valley Brewery
1630 E Francis St #J, Ontario
chinovallebrewery.com

Coachella Valley Brewing Co.
30-640 Gunther St
Thousand Palms
cvbco.com

Craft Brewing Co.
530 Crane St, Lake Elsinore
craftbrewingcompany.com

Dale Bros. Brewing
2120 Porterfield Way, Upland
dalebrosbrewery.com

Electric Brewing Co.
41537 Cherry St, Murietta
electricbrewco.com

Escape Craft Brewery
721 Nevada St #401, Redlands
escapecraftbrewery.com

Garage Brewing Co
29095 Old Towne Front St,
Temecula
garagebrewco.com

Hamilton Family Brewery
9757 Seventh St #802,
Rancho Cucamonga
hamiltonfamilybrewery.com

Hangar 24 Brewery
1710 Sessums Drive
Redlands
hangar24brewery.com

I & I Brewing
5135 Edison Ave #1, Chino
iandibrewing.com

Inland Empire Brewing Company
1710 Palmyrita Ave #11,
Riverside
iebrew.com

Ironfire Brewing Co.
42095 Zevo Dr #1, Temecula
ironfirebrewing.com

La Quinta Brewing Co.
77917 Wildcat Dr, Palm Desert
laquintabrewing.com

No Clue Brewing
9037 #170 Arrow Route
Rancho Cucamonga
nocluebrew.com

Packinghouse Brewing Co.
6421 Central Ave #101-A, Riverside
pbbeer.com

Refuge Brewery
43040 Rancho Way, Temecula
refugebrew.com

Ritual Brewing Co.
1315 Research Dr, Redlands
ritualbrewing.com

Rök House Brewing Company
1939 W 11th St #A, Upland
rokhousbrewing.com

Thompson Brewing Company
9860 Indiana Ave, Riverside
thompsonbrewing.com

Wiens Brewing
27941 Diaz Rd, Temecula
Wiensbrewing.com

Wild Donkey Brewing Co.
2351 W Lugonia Ave, Redlands
facebook.com/DonkeyPunchBrewery

BREW PUBS

Heroes Restaurant & Brewery
3397 Mission Inn Avenue, Riverside
heroesrestaurantandbrewery.com

TAPS Fish House & Brewery
2745 Lakeshore Dr, Corona, CA
tapsfishhouse.com

Wicks Brewing Company
11620 Sterling Ave, Riverside
wicksbrewing.com

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