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Brian Mercer of Brouwerij West

Photo Credit: Andi Hakim

By Daniel Drennon

If patience is a virtue, Brian Mercer must be a fucking saint. Witness that Mr. Mercer began brewing his Brouwerij West Belgian-style beers in 2009, a date that would rightfully put him among the “oldest” of the new wave of craft breweries in Los Angeles.

But noooo!!! (nod to John Belushi) Mercer was not allowed to play in that sandbox as he was regarded as a “contract brewer.” A contract brewer carries a stigma in that you are brewing your beers at other folks’ breweries and, thus, you are not viewed as legit.

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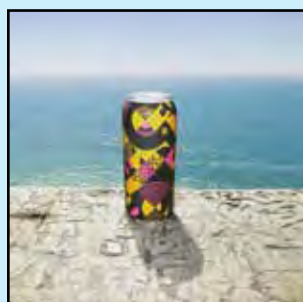
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PINTS & QUOTES

BEER MONEY

By John M. Verive

It's obvious that the craft beer scene in Los Angeles in 2018 is booming. We tell you as much every month in these pages and look around, you'll see for yourself. A new brewery seems to open every couple of weeks and every trip to the bottle shop reveals new beers to try. But it is tough to quantify how big the boom is in any meaningful way. Just how much beer is made, sold, and drunk in Los Angeles? How much does the craft beer industry affect Los Angeles culture? It turns out to be a hundred-million-dollar question, and a group of second-year MBA students from the UCLA Anderson School of Management and commissioned by the Los Angeles County Brewers Guild (LABG) found the answer.

John Buckley, Neil Doshi, Samuel Prywes, Andy Schlichter, and Ankit Shah produced a report called the Economic and Social Impact of LA County Independent Craft Breweries

in 2017. Gathering survey responses, interviews with LA County brewery owners as well as looking at sales and production numbers, their final report concludes that the total economic impact of the county's 74 small and independent breweries was \$96,000,000 in 2017.

"Economic impact" is a calculation that shows how much a specific industry or event affects a particular region. In this case, it's craft brewing in Los Angeles County. From the report's executive summary:

Craft breweries are contributing to the LA County economy through investment, production, sales, and employment. In 2017, LABG member breweries generated approximately \$96 million of economic impact, 796 jobs, and \$34 million of labor income in LA County.

(Continued on next page)



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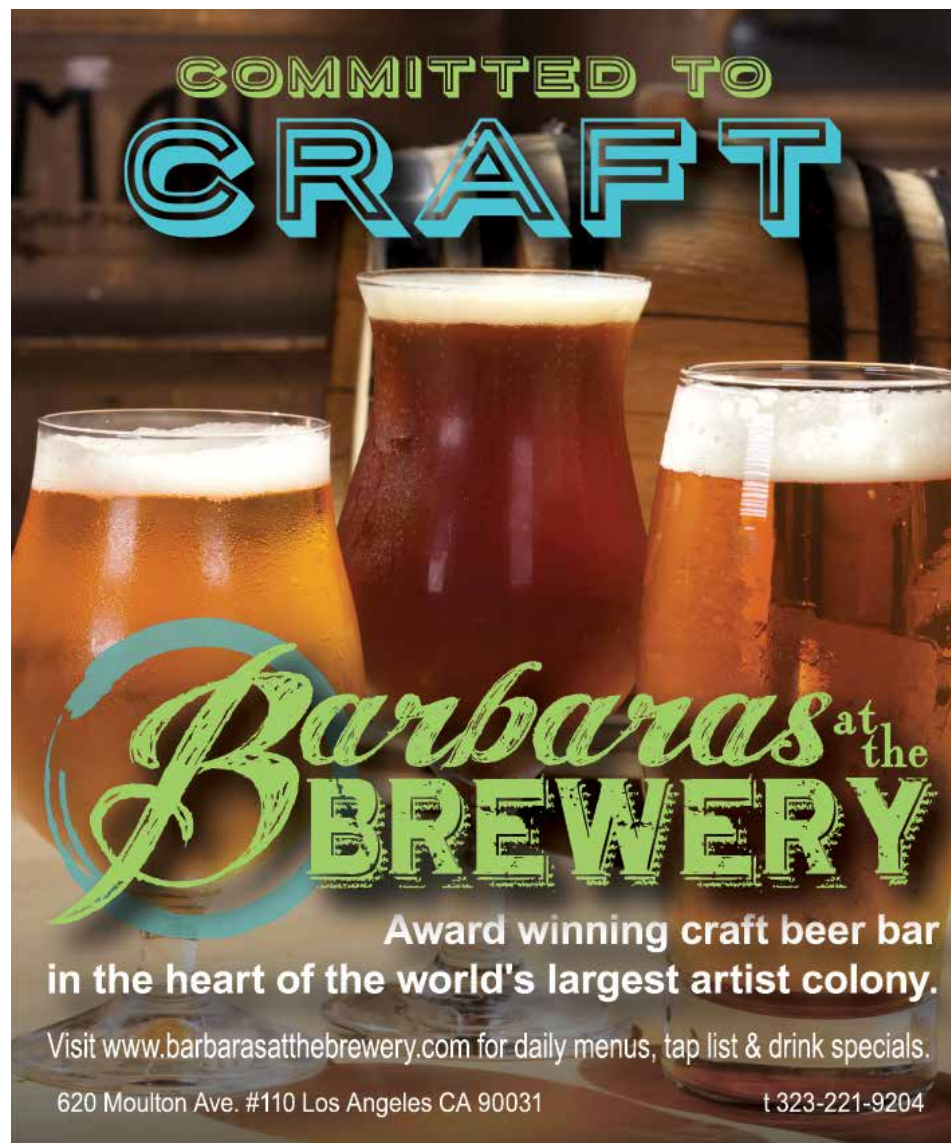
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LA Beer Week 2017

Photo Credit: Los Angeles County Brewers Guild

(BEER MONEY continued)

This economic impact represents a 45% increase relative to a 2015 study by the National University System Institute for Policy Research (NUSIPR).

The bottom line from that earlier NUSIPR report was \$66 million in direct economic impact, and, although the methodologies of the studies differ, the growth in the industry in just three years is impressive. (Even more so when you consider that Golden Road Brewing's production and revenue figures were included in the earlier report, as it covered 2014 - the year before the Anheuser-Busch buyout.) The NUSIPR report made the point that, in 2014, the craft beer industry in Los Angeles County made a larger impact on the local economy than Anime Expo, which they call "LA's largest annual convention" with an economic impact of some \$55 million.

The new report is filled with big numbers: LA brewers expect production to grow to 135,000 barrels annually this year, with over \$80 million in revenue. LABG member breweries donated nearly a half-million dollars' worth of beer to charitable causes in 2017, and directly employed over 300 full-time workers (with almost another 600 part-time employees). Even clearly quantified, the impact of the craft beer industry in Los Angeles is difficult to visualize. What does an economic impact of some \$96 million dollars look like? It looks something like the NBA All-Star Weekend.

In February 2018, the NBA All-Star Game was held at the Staples Center in Downtown Los Angeles, and the attendant festivities spilled out across LA. Perhaps you remember that weekend's terrible traffic, the inability to get a dinner reservation, or the throngs of basketball fans at local institutions. The Los Angeles Times reports that the events were expected to draw over one hundred thousand people "with about a third of all celebrants coming from outside of the region." Hotel rooms were expensive that weekend, and it seemed like Uber was always charging surge-pricing. A clerk at the Banana Republic at the Beverly Center said the Saturday crowds in the mall were some of the biggest she'd ever seen. Bigger even than Black Friday. There were a lot of people visiting Los Angeles, and they were spending a lot of cash. It turned out to be a rather big deal. The estimated economic impact of the NBA All-Star Weekend in Los Angeles was some \$116 million — not too far off from the LABG study figure of \$96 million.

The craft beer industry in LA has been on a full-court press for years, and points keep racking up. The LABG economic impact report paints a rosy picture of the industry and where it's headed, but even as the breweries multiply and the beer gets better, LA still lags far behind San Diego's beer scene. A report on San Diego breweries in 2016 commissioned by the San Diego Brewers Guild showed 150 craft breweries and \$870 million in direct economic impact — twice that of the San Diego Zoo. That's twice the number of breweries, and nearly 10 times the economic impact. LA beer has a long way to go before it's out from under the shadow of San Diego's seminal scene.

A report by the California Craft Brewers Association (CCBA) on the state's craft brewing industry in 2016 showed over 700 breweries operation in the Golden State (today, there's a thousand), with a total economic impact of \$7.3 billion. L.A.'s \$100 million is just a drop in a very large bucket, and L.A. probably won't see a homegrown brewery get as big as the behemoths from San Diego. Finding a way to get more people in Los Angeles drinking beer made in LA by independent brewers is the best way to keep the industry in Los Angeles healthy and growing.

John Verive is a Southern California native and freelance writer dedicated to growing the craft beer scene in Los Angeles. He's is a Certified Cicerone®, the founder of Beer of Tomorrow (www.BeerofTomorrow.com), and he covers the beer-beat for the Los Angeles Times. Find him on Twitter and Instagram at @octopusht and @beeroftomorrow.



Photo Credit: Los Angeles County Brewers Guild



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LADYBEER

Long Beach Can Thank City Planning for its Explosive Brewery Growth

By Sarah Bennett

Aaron Henderson, Robert Booth and Dennis Russo only started contract brewing and distributing cans of their blonde ale around Long Beach in December, but already they've released a second beer (an IPA), signed a lease on a suburban storefront and are well on their way to having a brewery of their own.

While the trajectory from contract brew to production facility isn't new or rare, what sets Steady Brew Beer Co. apart is the speed at which it's been moving through Long Beach's business licensing and planning process.

As anyone who's done it before will tell you, opening a brewery can be a frustrating, time-consuming, expensive and laborious process that often takes years and requires grappling with confusing regulations and dealing with seemingly endless back and forth with city, state and federal agencies.

Henderson, on the other hand, says he and his partners signed the lease Feb. 1 and, though he doesn't like to make promises about specific dates, expects Steady's nano-sized two-barrel brewhouse and tasting room to be up and running soon.

"The city's been great," Henderson said in early March of his experience so far. "No one's given us any eye rolling. I know that when my wife went to pick our plans up a few weeks ago, they asked a question about a business license that we didn't know and a woman behind the counter said, 'Oh, we'll just do what we did with Ambitious Ales.'"

Steady and Ambitious Ales are just two of the five breweries currently in planning in Long Beach, the most of any city in the region. Add that to Long Beach's existing six breweries -- including corporate-owned Ballast Point and excluding Ten Mile in Signal Hill and Timeless Pints in Lakewood -- and the city is poised to become the next Torrance or Anaheim, both places that used their business-friendly city halls to encourage growth in the craft beer segment.



Long Beach Beer Lab was the first licensed production brewery in Long Beach history.

Owner/Brewer Levi Fried makes sour, funky and hoppy beers, including terpene-infused IPAs

Photo Credit: Sarah Bennett

This impressive growth of breweries (and the familiarity that Long Beach Development Services employees now have in working with them) can be traced directly back to several legislative changes that the city adopted over the last few years, which is making it easier than ever to make beer in Long Beach.

In 2013, Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia, who was still a councilmember at the time, submitted a formal request for city staff to review current licensing and zoning policies for breweries and brewpubs in Long Beach. They researched best practices currently being utilized by major beer destinations like San Diego and Denver, and in 2015 established new zoning and business standards in the hopes of attracting more small breweries, which employ locals, enrich neighborhoods and are drivers of economic development and tourism.

"Overall the most important thing we did

was make it very clear that Long Beach was open for business when it came to the beer economy and supporting the breweries that wanted to open here," Garcia says. "We made some zoning changes and streamlined all the procedures to make it easier."

The zoning code amendment expanded the places where craft breweries, wineries, distilleries and accessory tasting rooms could operate while lifting some requirements for conditional use permits, which can be time-consuming and costly to acquire.

As part of this beer-friendly overhaul, staff in the city's planning department also received specialized training on what breweries are and aren't so they can better guide owners during the process. The ordinance also provided clear and concise development standards -- in the form of a handy checklist -- designed to reduce start-up costs and expedite the

process of opening a new production facility.

In late 2016, Long Beach created further legislation aimed at encouraging craft breweries to open there by loosening burdensome requirements for parking, distances from schools and operating hours.

Since the city also has its own health and water departments, the goal is to zoom new breweries through the first part of the planning process, so they can concentrate on building out and buying assets.

"One thing I'm impressed about the breweries and bars serving craft beer is that they employ a lot of local Long Beach people that love beer," Garcia says. "It's been a culture change but we're proud of what's going on."

Long Beach Beer Lab was the first brewery to take advantage of these new policies and became the first licensed production brewery in city history when it opened last summer (all previously installed brewhouses were inside of restaurants, meaning they were licensed as brewpubs).

Co-owner Levi Fried is a Long Beach native, but was living in Israel with his wife Harmony Sage and their children, struggling against the bureaucracy to open a brewery there, when he got a call about the policy changes happening in his hometown. On a trip to Long Beach in late 2015, he met with a councilmember to discuss his options and within a few months moved his family back to the States and began prepping to launch his all-Kosher beer project (with attached bakery for Sage).

Though the ordinance was in its early phases of implementation, having a specific checklist outlining what was needed in order to get through the plan check was helpful in speeding Long Beach Beer Lab through the process. Fried says he was surprised to see that the planning department and the city as a whole on a political level really got behind the cause.

“If I ran into a hiccup, I’d call up business development services or go to the fourth floor [of Long Beach City Hall] and they’d advocate for you,” he says. “Planning and advocacy was the biggest thing that the city helped out with. A plan check was handed to me but building hadn’t caught up. They were still trying to figure out in a bureaucratic way how to streamline everything, but I was the first so they had some things to work out still.”

Two years -- and several more breweries (including a Smog City taproom) -- later and city planning staff are nearly experts on getting new breweries through to the building phase.

Steady Brew’s Henderson says it only took a week for him to get his original plans reviewed. They were returned to him with red-line notes that clearly explained what questions needed to be answered and what would and would not be allowed.

He says Steady also found an advocate at the city, someone he could call anytime he had a question.

“I tried to cover as many bases as I could on my own,” Henderson says, “but



Steady Brew Beer Co.’s Dennis Russo, Robert Booth and Aaron Henderson (l to r) stand in front of their Long Beach storefront, which should be up and running soon

if I ever needed anything, I emailed him with questions and he responded immediately. He never put me off or sent me to someone else.”

Because the brewery is so small and won’t require trench-digging and major build out like some of the city’s other in-planning breweries (see: Ambitious Ales, Trademark Brewing, Liberation Brewing Co.), Steady should be pouring by summer.

“The reason why we’ve been successful in attracting breweries is that we naturally already have a really cool city,” mayor Garcia says. “Long Beach already has a cool, diverse and progressive vibe and so these businesses just fit in really well to a lot of what we already have going on.”

In Planning:
Liberation

Trademark
Hog Canyon
Steady Brewing
Ambitious Ales
LB Beer Labs (Tasting Room)

Currently Open:
Rock Bottom
BBC
Beachwood
Dutch’s Brewhouse
Long Beach Beer Labs
Ballast Point
Smog City (Tasting Room)

Sarah Bennett is a freelance journalist covering beer, food, music and more for L.A. Times, OC Weekly, Eater, Beer Advocate and more. She was named the Food/Culture critic of 2017 by the L.A. Press Club. Follow her on social media @thesarahbennett.

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WISHEFUL DRINKING

TAPPED OUT

Last Call for Culver City Home Brewing

By Tomm Carroll

The first Saturday each May, which happens to be Cinco de Mayo this year, is also National Homebrew Day. That irony isn't lost on the four owners of Culver City Home Brewing Supply, who are not in a partying mood. CCHBS will sell its final fermenter, its last liquid yeast pack, its concluding corny keg, and its remaining recipe for Inglewood IPA before the end of the month. Sadly, the store is closing its doors for good at 7:00 pm on May 27.

After a 24-plus-year run, the Westside's premiere homebrew shop — which is the birthplace of the Pacific Gravity Homebrew Club, and still serves as its unofficial headquarters — has fallen victim to increased competition (especially from online vendors, including Amazon and AB InBev's Northern Brewer and Midwest Supplies) and a diminished interest in homebrewing overall.

The keg-kicker, however, was the skyrocketing rents in Culver City and the western part of LA in general. The landlord is demanding more than a 10% increase to renew the building's lease, forcing the store, which is open daily but has barely been breaking even for the last few years, to shutter. The tap has run dry for CCHBS.

"Craft beer may be booming in LA, but homebrewing is on the decline nationwide," lamented co-owner Greg Beron, a CCHBS patron since 1999 who bought into the shop in 2002 and began teaching beginning brewing classes. "Many of our active homebrewers in Pacific Gravity who supported the shop have gone on to open their own breweries, which is great."

Indeed, among those PG alumni-gone-pro are Lee Bakofsky (Eagle Rock Brewery); Kristofor "Kip" Barnes, Brian Holter and Lloyd Johnson (LA Ale Works); Michael Bowe (founder and original owner of Angel City Brewing); Chris "Cosmo" Briles (Cosmic Brewing); Samuel "Chewy" Chawinga (Boomtown Brewery); Joseph Kovach (the upcoming Tortuga Brewing); Drew Pomatti (Santa Monica Brew Works); Jonathan and Laurie Porter (Smog City Brewing); Devon Randall (Arts District Brewing); and Martin Svab

and Simon Ford (Phantom Carriage).

However, brewing your own beer was all the rage in the previous decade. "For ten years, the store, and homebrewing in LA, enjoyed unprecedented growth," Beron acknowledged. "Unfortunately, the last five years have not been as good."

In fact, during that heyday, Beron and Kevin Koenig — who also signed on as a co-owner of CCHBS in 2002 — decided to open Eagle Rock Home Brewing Supply with Eastside partner Thomas Galvin in 2011 to service brewers in that part of town. With much more reasonable rent, ERHBS is doing fine for now, and Beron and Koenig expect a small boost in business with the closing of the Culver City shop, which plans to sell any remaining merchandise to its Eagle Rock sister after May 27.

CCHBS' other two principals — Craig Corley, a loyal customer who became a partner in 1998, and Tim Bardet, who was one of the shop's first clients and came on board in 2004 — will be out of the brewing supply business. But they were not in it full-time; Bardet has a day job and Corley is retired from his.

The Beery Beginnings

CCHBS was founded in 1994 by enterprising Westside homebrewers Fred Waltman and Steve LaBrie, who were members of the Maltose Falcons, LA's (and the country's) first homebrew club. But growing tired of schlepping way up to Woodland Hills to shop for brew supplies and attend meetings at the Falcons' headquarters — the Home Wine, Beer and Cheesemaking Shop — they decided to open their own store in Culver City and start their own club,

while keeping their full-time jobs. They leased a storefront on Sepulveda Blvd., appropriately near a cross street named Barman Ave.

"Part of our job then was just getting the word out that it was possible — and legal — to make beer at home," Waltman told Beer Paper, adding that it was a much different homebrewing environment back in the early and mid-'90s. "One of the main drivers in the early days was that it was hard to find good beer commercially, so brewing your own was one way to get good beer," he recalled. "That's obviously not the case today. Also, back in those days, there was a bit of a counter-cyclical aspect: When there was a bit of an economic slump, we had some people brewing more often — to save money."

The original owners took on other



Homeless Homebrew: Culver City Homebrew Supply owners Greg Beron, left, Kevin Koenig (with daughter Casey), Craig Corley and Tim Bardet

Photo Credit: Tomm Carroll

partners over the next several years, but when LaBrie changed careers, and Waltman's day-job workload increased, they no longer had the time to manage the shop, so they sold their shares to Beron and Koenig in 2002. Other former co-owners throughout the years included Harrison Gibbs, Alan Gilbert and the late Craig Baker (who famously played Santa Claus at the PG/CCHBS holiday parties at the shop).

The big setback for CCHBS came in 2013, when the owner of the building that originally housed the business decided to sell the property, prompting the homebrew supply shop to find another home. The current partners found a location only a few blocks up Sepulveda, just north of Culver Blvd. But retrofitting it, and bringing it up to modern codes, took some time — and not a small amount of money, which was already growing tight due to the dwindling homebrew business. To make matters worse, the old shop closed in July and the new one didn't open until December of that year, forcing its already diminishing clientele to buy supplies elsewhere during the interim. In many respects, CCHBS never really recovered from that expensive disruption. Which brings us to the unfortunate situation today.

No Tears in Their Beers

"One thing I especially found gratifying about being part of CCHBS was having the ability to put beginning brewers' nerves at ease by talking them through a process that can be intimidating at first," Bardet

offered, reflecting on the imminent closure. "I was there once myself, so I was glad to do what I could to put them on the right track to better homebrew. Conversely, I picked up plenty of good advice from our customers as well and became a better brewer thanks to them."

"It's been a fun ride and I'm gonna miss it," added Corley, who nearly made it 20 years as a co-owner. "While I'd rather continue the shop for the sake of the club and local homebrewers, I accept that the realities of the business prevent that. But we'll adapt; change is a constant, and this is just one of the many..."

Summing up the feelings of his fellow partners, Beron bemoaned, "It pains me to leave the Westside and the loyal homebrewers who stuck with us during the past few lean years."

So, if you need some homebrew supplies, make sure to drop in to CCHS at 4234 Sepulveda Blvd. in Culver City by May 27. And even if you don't brew, stop by to thank the owners for keeping the local homebrew kettle boiling for over two-dozen years — and for the shop's early role in the career paths of so many of LA's commercial brewers. Here's to you, guys!

Award-winning beer writer Tomm Carroll has been a member of Pacific Gravity since 2004. A longtime contributor to Celebrator Beer News, he is also a BJCP-schooled international beer judge and teaches a craft beer class at UCLA Extension (next course starts June 25). Contact him at beerscribe@earthlink.net.



Culver City Home Brewing

Photo Credit: Tomm Carroll

COVER STORY

LORD, HAVE MERCER ON US

By Daniel Drennon

The self-effacing and magnanimous Mercer had plans to open his own brewery in his hometown of San Pedro. He thought it would take mere months. It took seven years.

I sat down with Mercer in the former Port of Los Angeles warehouse which is now Brouwerij West. Continuing the Biblical vein of this article's title, "All good things come to those who wait," because, in my humble opinion, Brouwerij West is one of the most beautiful breweries I have ever visited.

And, oh by the way, the beer is damn delicious.

DRENNON: *Where did you grow up and how did that shape you into who you have become?*

MERCER: I was born in San Pedro and lived there till I was 14. My mom sold our house and we moved to Mission Viejo. After high school I traveled around the world for ten years on the cheap. Not sure if I could say how it shaped me but I was always in love with being on the road, eating different food and sort of being lost in new country and traveling by myself. I worked everywhere and anywhere. I sheared sheep and picked fruit in New Zealand, hitch hiked around Australia, traveled around Southeast Asia, ran a business in Athens, Greece... was a rafting guide in Alaska. Worked on fishing boat in Alaska too. Spent months in East Africa and was in Nairobi the morning they bombed the embassy. Was a ski instructor for years. Pretty much what everyone does after high school I think.

DRENNON: *Yeah. Uh...no. I didn't even venture out of the country until I was almost 40 and I couldn't shear a sheep if my life depended upon it! So, with that crazy independent streak you obviously had, what did you want to be when you were growing up?*

MERCER: I really wanted to be a writer or a photographer. Mostly a writer. But I had nothing to say and had not lived much for any real insight. So, I focused on photographer. You know, like all kids I wanted to be a national geographic photographer. Anyway, I worked pretty hard at it and eventually I became a



Brouwerij West Team Photo

Photo Credit: Jane Narayan

failed photographer instead. That's when brewing arrived I guess.

DRENNON: *When and why did you decide you wanted to be a brewer and own your own brewery?*

MERCER: I don't know that I did. I was a confirmed failure at professional photography, and one day we were driving by Steinfillers and my girlfriend said, "Hey! Make beer." So, I bought a kit with all the buckets, hoses, and malt extract plus a copy of "How to Brew Beer" by John Palmer. I loved it. It was so cool. I loved the process, so I kept going and instead of saving a ton of money on beer, as was promised, I spent every penny and every waking moment learning about beer and brewing. It was a perfect diversion from photography and also the stress of being a new father, which had just happened. Somewhere about then I fell in love with Trappist beers and became convinced that I could make beer just like it. I was totally wrong.

DRENNON: *That was a lofty goal.*

MERCER: Right? I was trying to make perfect copies of dark Trappist beers and failing. Then I figured out that an important ingredient was missing. It turned out to be a translation error and American brewers were using the wrong

type of sugar. In fact, the Belgians had been exporting the wrong sugar to the U.S. for years and American brewers were using this sugar trying to make perfect copies of Trappist beers just like me. So, I got on a plane to Belgium and tracked down the correct sugar (a caramelized syrup in fact) and worked out how to import it to the U.S.

Over the next few years I worked as a photo assistant and studio manager to a photographer hero of mine and at night and by day I imported and sold sugar to brewers. At first it was like all new businesses, very slow. I would fill small sample bottles of the syrup, label them, put the bottles in boxes and ship them off to every brewer possible. Everyday, I would drop off 20-30 of these samples at Fed Ex and wait. And wait. And wait. Finally, it happened. While on a photo job, I got a call. "Hi! This is Phil Markowski and a bottle of syrup showed up here with nothing but a label and your number."

Oh shit! I was so excited. Phil Markowski was a legend and I loved every page of his book, "Farmhouse Ales: Culture and Craftsmanship in the Belgian Tradition." From there, it sort of took off. Not quite like in the movies, but to me it was magical. Calls continued to come

in and pretty much I was an importer/distributor. Over the next few years, the business would grow and I would sell sugar to every craft brewery in the country. Then Canada. But the best part was that I got to go to Belgium a ton and I could visit all the breweries and brewers that I had read so much about. This was 2005-ish. It was so cool.

DRENNON: *This is so cool. I know you were brewing your beers for years before you were able to get BW sited and open. Tell us about some of those challenges and how you overcame them.*

MERCER: Yeah, so after doing so much working with sugar and breweries, I really wanted to brew beer. After all, that was what I really cared about. So, I started brewing at the only local brewery that would let me brew beer with the ingredients I wanted and in the way I wanted. It was pretty tough because the brewery only ran at night. I would mash in at 9 pm and would wrap up the last batch at about 9 am. I'd sleep in my car for a couple hours and then I'd start my self-distribution of the kegs. Beachwood, Simmzy's, and Father's Office were my first accounts.

I only made a blond then. I really wanted to brew in the style of the Belgian brewers that I admired so much and who I had

seen use such simple recipes yet achieve wonderfully complex beer. It was tough to get anything close to that but I did work hard at it. Dumped a ton of beer and used the best ingredients I could find. I was a contract brewer. I was so proud to be brewing. But it was hard. Brewing in someone else's brewery is certainly a challenge to being able to brew the beer you want, not get in the way, be super respectful of the borrowed brewery and also to try and overcome the label of contract brewer. For some reason, I was never considered a gypsy brewer. I don't know why.

But, there I was every week brewing and distributing beer. In those days it seemed like Rich Marcello (of Strand Brewing) and I would always pull up to Father's Office at the same time and then race to drop off our kegs at Library Ale House or somewhere else like that. I loved it and couldn't wait to open my own brewery. I was sure it would be only months away. That was 2009. Turns out it was seven years away.

DRENNON: *Talk about resiliency and patience. What was your training and path to be a brewer?*



2nd Anniversary Party featuring X

Photo Credit: Chris Valle



Mercer with partner and Undercover Super Genius Dave Holop

Photo Credit: Andrea Machuca - Kirkland

MERCER: Only homebrewing and the things I had seen in Belgium. I wanted to go to Siebel but by that time I had two kids and was running the sugar business full time and so it was out of the question.

DRENNON: *Do you have a brewing philosophy?*

MERCER: That sounds awfully serious DFD! I forget where I heard it, but I really like, "There are only questions."

DRENNON: *What have been your most important lessons learned as a brewery owner and as a brewer?*

MERCER: Oh man, I think I need 50 more years of brewing before I have any real knowledge. I don't know if it's a lesson I learned, but I think it's interesting that the time and effort it takes to do average work and exceptional work is almost the same. It's just the amount of care and attention going into the work that seems to be the difference. Getting serious again!

DRENNON: *Do any fellow brewers inspire you?*

MERCER: Yes, All of them! I love seeing what everyone is doing. Now is such an amazing time in brewing. I feel so lucky and inspired to have been in brewing for so long and to see so much change. Brewers are the coolest.

DRENNON: *What are your goals for Brouwerij West?*

MERCER: I am so proud of what we have built in San Pedro. I have known these warehouses since I was kid and it is amazing to be brewing and working there everyday. And our team! Wow, what a cool group of people. I'm honored that they love this place so much and work so hard. You should really be interviewing them. They deserve all the credit.

As for goals, I want to continue to expand our production, increasing quality at the same time and to continue the art and packaging we have invented. I can't wait for the next beer and label to be packaged.

DRENNON: *Between talent and work ethic, which is more important?*

MERCER: Not sure I am a good judge. Both are helpful and one or the other can certainly be enough. Maybe luck needs to be in there equally. Yeah, luck. Timing is important too.

DRENNON: *If I ask you to describe yourself in one or two words, what would they be?*

MERCER: I'll definitely do my best to answer that when you do ask.

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BREWER'S CORNER

THE UNCOMMON JOURNEY

By Kirk Nishikawa



Kirk Nishikawa of Brewery Beer Company

Photo Credit: Mike Sagun

Like most born and raised Angelenos, I drank what dominated the local beer landscape: American, uh, pale lagers. Although mostly flavorless, they did their job. Since this was the 90's, I also drank a large amount of Alize, Hennessey, Cuervo, Mickey's and Hypnotic. Don't judge. BTW, I was definitely of drinking age when I started.

My beer universe began to expand when my high school buddy, now brewery partner, Sherwin (aka Sherm da Worm), started brewing his own beer. What I noticed about our group of friends that dove into the craft beer rabbit hole along with us was that our tastes and our snobbery grew. It seemed like overnight, we just outright rejected anything labeled "lager". Then the jokes about piss water began whenever we saw people drinking those "Less Filling" beverages. Good times. I went on several "journeys" including my Hefe Phase, Stout Summer, IPA Period, and Belgian Bender phases.

Just like when you OD on tequila, it took an extended period of beer style sobriety to return to any style I binged on. I eventually returned to the lager family after shunning it for so long but this time I went beyond the pale (Hoooooot Pocket!).

Act II (Gesundheit!)

"Wow! These are lagers!?", I said to myself after trying a slew of German

"Bock" beers. So malty. So full, yet crisp. You mean lagers can be dark, smoky, oaky and/or hoppy too?! Let's try more! I did and I realized something.

The notion that ales are flavor bombs and lagers are light and flavorless is the fault of the big guys peddling bland product that people assume represents the lager category in its entirety and also the fault of the craft beer community not clarifying this myth to serve their own ale based needs. Sadly, most people starting out their craft beer journey have this preconceived notion of lagers. I did.

Although many lager styles tend to have less body and flavor, they can have just as much as ales if you brew them a certain way. In some cases, the finish is the only major thing you can distinguish between their ale counterparts.

Things that make you go, "Hm m m m m m m m m m."

Here's the thing, the term "Ale" and "Lager" don't actually connote two polar opposite universal flavor profiles. It's not about the yeast and it's not about the act of lagering that define those categories.

You're screwed either way trying to define what makes a lager a lager and an ale an ale. Is a lagered ale a lager because it's lagered? Or is it an ale because it uses ale yeast? If a lager isn't
(Continued on next page)



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(BREWER'S CORNER continued)

lagered and fermented like an ale is it no longer a lager? A Cream Ale can be brewed with lager yeast and be lagered. Why isn't it a lager by that point if it's all about the yeast or act of lagering? It's still called a Cream Ale because of the flavor profile. California Commons, Cream Ales and certain American Wheat Beers upset this idea so much that they had to throw it in a separate Hybrid Lager/Ale category like they were crack pot theories on Ancient Aliens. In terms of beer judging, it doesn't matter if it's brewed with lager or ale yeast since it's just a profile which you can theoretically achieve through either type. Why even split it up between the two categories if ale yeast isn't a requirement for ale category submissions and visa versa? Why? Because people feel smarter and happier with black and white regardless of the gray truth.

Example: A man walks into our taproom. We offer an IPL and an IPA but both are actually brewed with lager yeast. He tries both of them. "I hate the IPL but this IPA is awesome. Yeah I don't like lagers. Too light and I can taste the yeast in my teeth." :I SMH. Keeping it real.

I guess growing up with mostly light lager based alcoholic seltzer water (Up

high anyone? Anyone? Whatever.), there was a comforting familiarity to the crispness that is more prevalent in lager-based craft beers. Maybe also since I was born and raised in L.A., I grew up with superhot dry weather 95% of my life. Drinking lighter bodied cleaner finished beers may just be something I psychologically prefer. We don't get the snowy winters that create the perfect conditions to drink a nice malty, full bodied imperial stout. In fact, we mostly just get light lager weather. When we talk about darker heavier seasonal beers for the Fall/Winter, we have to ask ourselves, "What environments were these seasonal beers originally brewed in?" We have no seasons in Los Angeles. Winters are "light jacket" days most of the time. To be fair, if you live here long enough, a 5 degree temperature swing can have you reaching for your beanie. I'm getting off course here though. What this state needs are beers with a light lager finish to accommodate our hot weather but with the wonderful flavors that ales are introducing us to.

A Fools Errand that is Breweryard

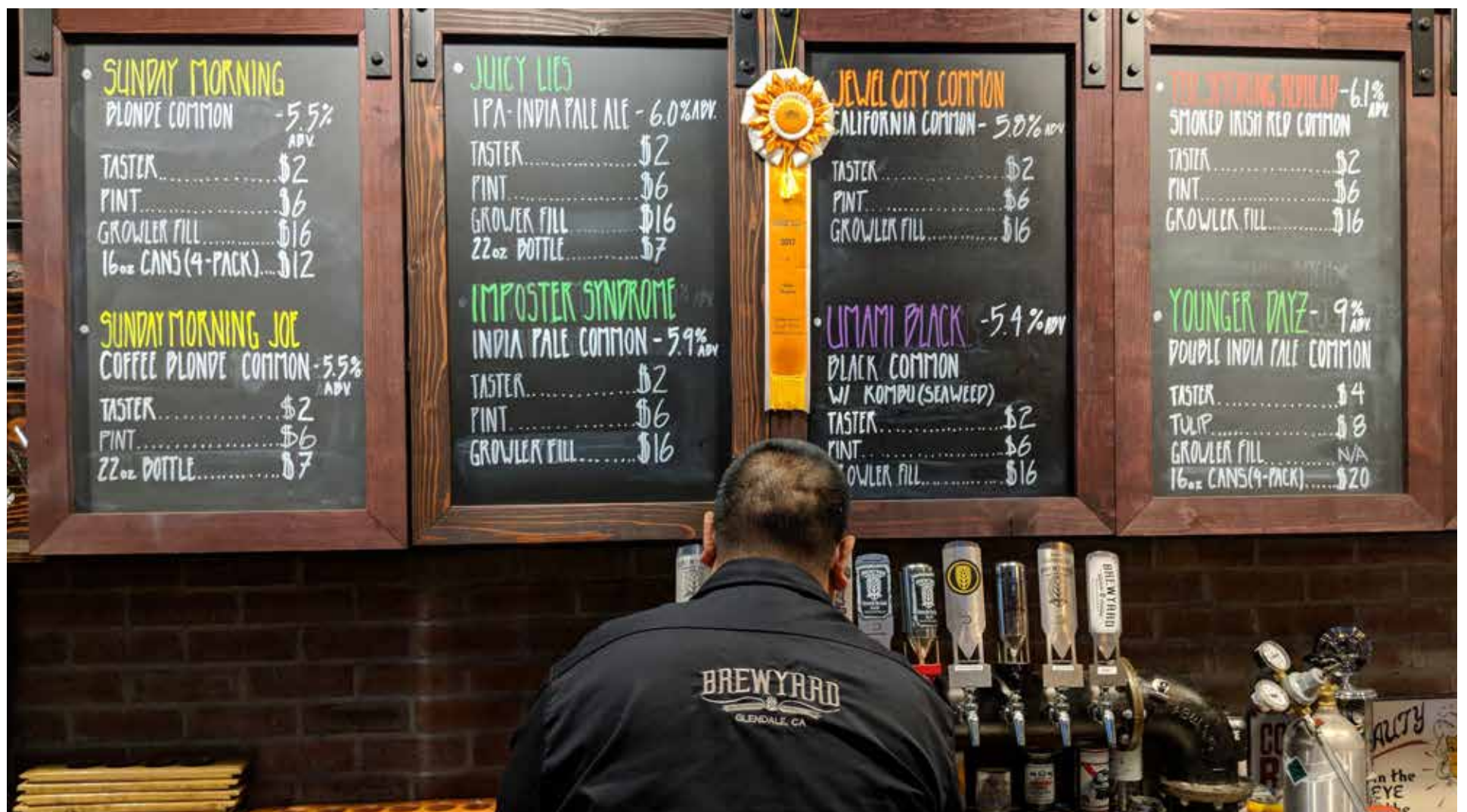
What if a crazy craft brewery decided take on that challenge to brew an entirely new commercial category of lager based Hybrid Common beers that originated



in California and are proliferated by homebrewers? They would have the levels of flavor of an ale and the clean finish of a lager. You'd think they'd at least get a light golf clap for creating a homegrown beer style suitable for the L.A. population right? Sadly, I can tell you they would probably lose a lot of crafty drinkers that assume the beers they label as "Lagers" are too light and flavorless. Eventually, they would just be mislabeled as the "Lager Brewery" lacking "Real" beer and some would marginalize them because they don't have a Stout, Hazy or Sour.

Luckily, the crowds that do come in without preconceived notions of what ales and lagers should or shouldn't be love them. Liking a beer because you choose to like it is liberating. It's not influenced by a trend, a name, a style, a color, or whether it's an ale or lager. It's not from peer pressure and it doesn't make you any more or less hip. They are brewed specifically for you SoCalienis. And they are definitely not lagers...well sort of...ish...whatever.

Kirk Nishikawa is the co-founder and the "Igor" part of the brewing of Breweryard Beer Company. He comes from four generations of native Angelenos.



Brewyard Beer Company

Photo Credit: Kirk Nishikawa



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PROFILE

INSTITUTION ALES

A Careful & Methodical Approach to Beer

By Erin Peters

Back in the late 80s, up to the late 90s, my family and I would drive by Camarillo State Hospital nearly every weekend, on the way to Channel Islands Harbor to take our boat out to Anacapa Island. Appropriately, my dad often blared "Hotel California." I grinned because I believed the song's wild stories. And I've always just really dug the song.

While the mental hospital is gone, the memory lives on in what's becoming a craft beer institution in Ventura County. Named for the state hospital that what is now the CSU Channel Islands campus, the brewery opened in September 2013. That's a long time ago, in Ventura County beer years.

The brothers and father quickly saw growth and moved into a bigger location about three years later. The new location on Mission Oaks Blvd. is more accessible

and noticeable and now has a restaurant component. The combination of commitment to high quality beers and a great space has expanded their audience quite a bit.

When Institution opened to a somewhat barren land of craft beer, the landscape of craft beer was quite different, co-founder/owner Shaun Smith explains.

"Enegren in Moorpark was open. I think Surf Brewery had opened. That was kind of it in Ventura, as far as an actual brewery...it was pretty small. Still is pretty small, but, yeah, it was just a little bit of like a homebrew, beer club type of beer culture. There wasn't a whole lot of breweries, so everyone was either home brewing, worked at a bar, or one of the few people that worked at a brewery, everyone knew everyone. There was probably a total of 80 people who had



Relapse, Imperial Red Rye

Photo Credit: Erin Peters

any sort of beer career going on, or beer hobby. So, that's what started it for us. We had just been homebrewing for a handful of years before we opened."

And the Smith brothers (Shaun & Ryan Smith) made friends with the Enegren brothers where they would host homebrew club meetings. Inspiration for the future Institution Ales started to marinate.

Father, Roger Smith, was also inspired by the German focused brewery in Moorpark and realized building a nano

brewery was more attainable than he thought.

Today, the Smiths want their brewery to be known as a community place to meet and enjoy great beer and conversation. In 2018, they will have brewed approximately 4,500 barrels. You'll find 15-20 beers on tap in the tasting room. And in Ventura and Santa Barbara County, Institution distributes five beers; Rx Pils, Restraint, Mosaic Pale Ale, Institution IPA and White Walls White IPA.

"We've never tried to make our beers



Institution's new canning line

Photo Credit: Erin Peters

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too unapproachable. We don't try to establish a culture of being pretentious or uptight about beer. We always had a great community support system, that's basically been people who got into craft beer because of us...we want to keep that going and appeal to the mass audience, and turn them onto beer."

In their large taproom, you'll find a nice selection of California/West Coast style ales and lagers, inspired by Sierra Nevada, Firestone Walker and Pizza Port.

"We always try to make small tweaks or get creative within traditional styles," Shaun shared.

Institution IPA and Pale Ale Mosaic were their two best-selling beers when they opened and remain popular among the Ventura County crowd.

"When we brewed it [Institution IPA] four years ago, the biggest difference, it was like a very aggressive, innovative beer, almost. It was super hoppy. It was like a west coast hop bomb that a lot of the other local breweries weren't doing...now, it's still our best seller, but it's almost like an old school IPA."

Shaun and Ryan tend to ask themselves, 'are we still drinking this at home?' and will brew what they like, whether the beer styles are new, older, trendy or not.

Three years ago, Institution brought home a Great American Beer Festival (GABF) bronze medal for their American-style brown ale, "Restraint." This was fantastic validation for the team, because the Smiths don't have a commercial brewery background.

Institution cans about seven to 15 barrels of beer every two weeks, for sale in the tasting room. You can find one-offs or newer beers like "Figures," a smooth oatmeal stout with rich layers of dark malts and sweet vanilla.

While Institution tends to go for consistency, they recently did receive an experimental hop, TRI 2303. Now that they are brewing more American style lagers, this subtle hop may come in handy for their smaller batches.

And the Smiths are also experimenting with Cryo Hops, the concentrated lupulin of whole-leaf hops, which elevate hop aromas and flavor. Find these fruit forward beers in some of their can releases.

"I've learned a lot from other brewers, too. Whether they put in bottling lines, and then the day they started bottling, they realized they should have canned. Or they opened a barrel room that is too big or too small because trends in what people are buying change so often...a lot of it is hindsight...all of us really are cautious with the business, but also perfectionists, in a way."

That means that even if it takes longer to build out more space because Roger is doing it himself, then it will take a little longer. But he knows it will be done right. Speaking of, the Smith family is building out another tasting room in the front of the brewery that will be focused on 21 and over customers.

Institution seems to be consistently bringing in new fans, in part because they are consistently producing great beers.

"That's one thing we really have a strong focus here, even for a smaller brewery, is taking the extra steps to make sure that the beer is good, and is going to stay good. There are some breweries that hit a lot of home runs, and then they also have some duds or issues and sometimes that just comes with the beer making process. But the ones who are really invested in the consistency aspect are way more impressive to us..."

To keep brewing high quality beers and steadily grow the brewery, the team takes a scientific yet organic approach. They have an advanced lab at the brewery where they calculate the bitterness and run overall quality control. Because – as Shaun explains- they 'only' have a homebrew background, have never apprenticed for another larger brewery or worked in the business before opening a brewery, the guys feel they need to verify their results and maybe work a little harder. And they're in no rush to get bigger. They appreciate the breweries who have a story and take it one step at a time.

"The whole selling point for us is, ya' know, you gotta' try local beer. It's so fresh when you get it at the brewery or the bar down the street five miles from us...that kind of foundation you built your brewery on, tried to preach to all your customers, it gets diluted a little bit every time you take your beer a little bit further or try to expand a little bit more. Ya' know, breweries like Beachwood and Pizza Port, they're growing now because they've had so many years of incredible successes, but it's still very cool that it's like, at some point they could have done it huge and instead always seemed more calculated..."

So what's next for Institution?

They are opening a tasting room in Santa Barbara, which has been in the plans since the beginning. This is slated to open in September. Expect a similar tasting room from their Camarillo headquarters, with their core beer lineup, pizza & pretzels. The guys also now have a new building across the street from the brewery for storage with a possible barrel aging program.

And the future isn't just looking bright for Institution Ales, it's looking dark and roasty. The Smiths have also secured another new building that they are looking to eventually open a coffee shop and event room. Taking a cue from Modern Times, the Smiths plan to roast their own coffee and brew with it in some of their future, darker beers. With their careful, methodical methods, expect to see this in about a year.

Erin Peters is a beer writer that has been enticing beer drinkers for a decade. Focusing on Southern California, she's uniquely poised and knowledgeable, having lived in seven So Cal cities including San Diego and Los Angeles. She's since returned home to Ventura County. She is the founder of thebeergoddess.com and her twitter feed is @TheBeerGoddess.



Clarity, Dry Hopped Golden Ale

Photo Credit: Erin Peters

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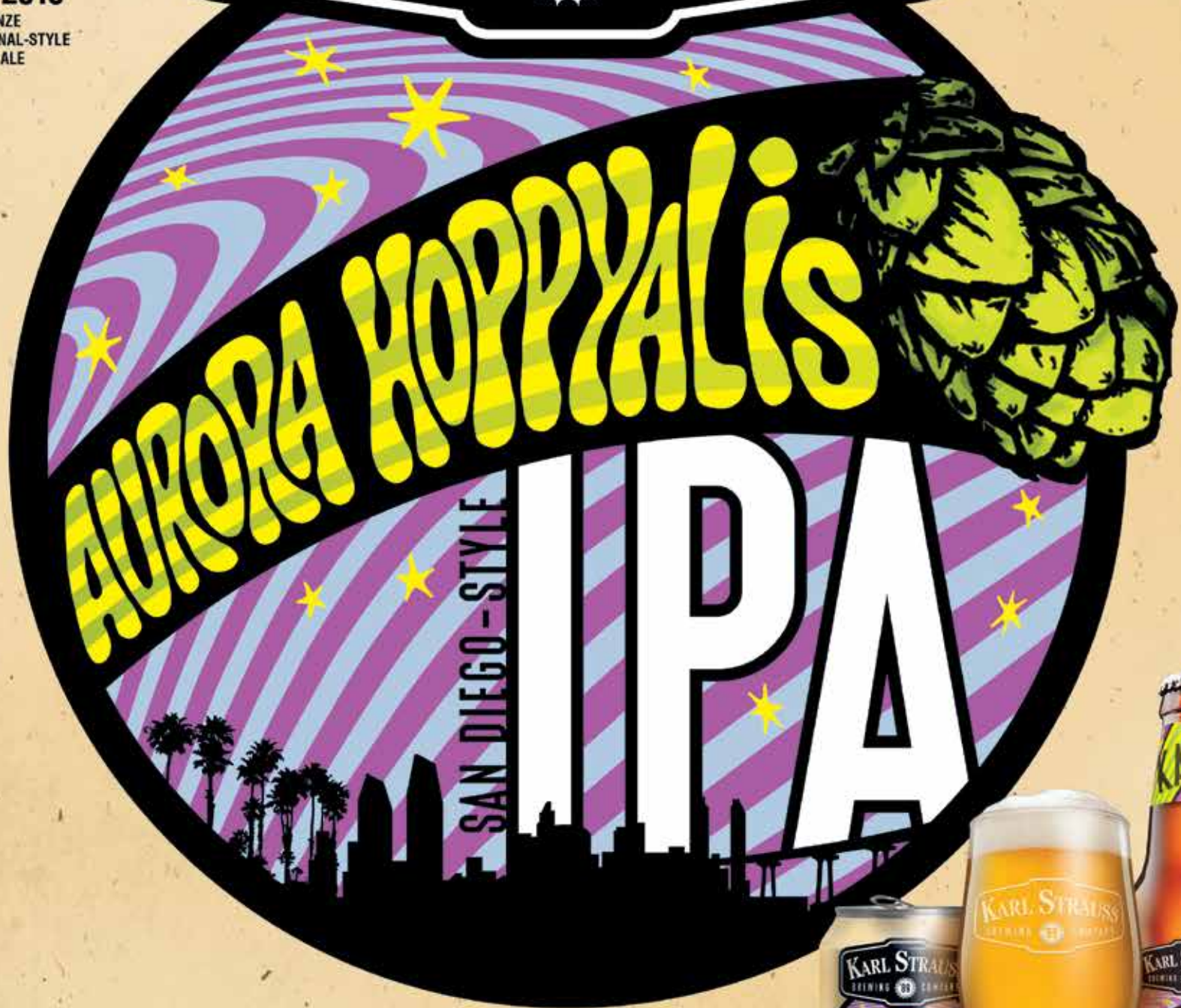
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verdugowestbrewing.com

Yorkshire Square Brewery
1109 Van Ness Ave, Torrance
yorkshiresquarebrewery.com

Zymurgy Brew Works and Tasting Room
22755 Hawthorne Blvd, Torrance
zymurgybrewworks.com

BREW PUBS

Beachwood BBQ & Brewing
210 E 3rd St, Long Beach
beachwoodbbq.com

Belmont Brewing Company
25 39th Pl, Long Beach
belmontbrewing.com

Bonaventure Brewing
404 S Figueroa St #418, Los
Angeles
bonaventurebrewing.com

Brewery at Abigaile
1301 Manhattan Ave, Hermosa
Beach
abigailerestaurant.com

Congregation Ales
Azusa Brewpub Chapter
619 N Azusa Ave, Azusa
congregationalehouse.com

Downey Brewing Company
10924 Paramount Blvd, Downey
thedowneybrewing.com

Firestone Walker - The Propagator
3205 Washington Blvd, Marina
Del Rey
firestonebeer.com/visit/venice.php

HopSaint Brewing Company
5160 W 190th St, Torrance
www.hopsaint.com

Innovation Brew Works
3650 W Temple Ave, Pomona
ibrewworks.com

Karl Strauss Brewing Company
600 Wilshire Blvd Ste 100, Los
Angeles
www.karlstrauss.com

Kinetic Brewing Company
735 W Lancaster Blvd, Lancaster
kineticbrewing.com

Ladyface Ale Companie
29281 Agoura Rd, Agoura Hills
ladyfaceale.com

Red Car Brewery and Restaurant
1266 Sartori Ave, Torrance
redcarbrewery.com

Rock Bottom Restaurant and Brewery
1 Pine Ave, Long Beach
rockbottom.com

San Pedro Brewing Company
331 W 6th St, San Pedro
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

Asylum Brewing
2970 La Palma, Suite D, Anaheim
asylumbrewingcompany.com

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

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

Beachwood Brewing Taproom
7631 Woodwind Dr, Huntington
Beach

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

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

Chapman Crafted Beer
123 N Cypress St, Old Towne
Orange
chapmancrafted.beer

Cismontane Brewing Co. Tasting Room
1409 E Warner Suite C, Santa Ana
cismontanebrewing.com

Docent Brewing
33049 Calle Aviator Suite C, San
Juan Capistrano
docentbrewing.com

Evans Brewing
2000 Main St, Irvine
evanslager.com

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



Downtown Fullerton Corner Retail

2,062sf of street front retail/restaurant space in the heart of Downtown Fullerton. Corner location on Harbor and Amerige. Perfect place for bar or brewery concept.



South Coast Metro Brewery

Large, open, 6,000 sf space ideal for a restaurant, brewery or distillery. Modern industrial chic - a one-of-a-kind space. High visibility with approximately 70' of street frontage facing MacArthur Blvd. Traffic counts upwards of 57,000 vehicles per day.



Historic Old Towne Orange

Rare opportunity to lease one of the historic buildings in the Downtown Plaza. Up to 7960 sq ft of restaurant or retail availability in the Orange Circle. Walking distance to Chapman University.

714.446.0600

www.SNVanguard.com

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All SVN® Offices Independently Owned and Operated

Green Cheek Beer Company
2294 N Batavia St #C, Orange
greencheekbeer.com

Gunwhale Ales
2960 Randolph Ave a, Costa Mesa
gunwhaleales.com

Hoparazzi Brewing Co.
2910 E La Palma Ave, Anaheim

Laguna Beach Beer Co
29851 Aventura Ste C-E, Rancho Santa Margarita
lagunabeer.com

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

Lost Winds Brewing Company
924 Calle Negocio Suite C, San Clemente
lostwindsbrewing.com

Network Brewery
824 Carnegie Ave, Santa Ana
networkbrewery.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 Hwy, Huntington Beach
riipbeer.com

Stereo Brewing
950 S Via Rodeo, Placentia
stereobrewing.com

The Bruery
715 Dunn Way, Placentia
thebruery.com

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

Towne Park Brewery
1566 W Lincoln Ave, Anaheim
towneparkbrew.com

Unsung Brewing Company
500 S Anaheim Blvd, Anaheim
unsungbrewing.com

BREW PUBS

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
tapsfishhouse.com

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

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

INLAND EMPIRE

BREWERIES

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

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

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

Dragon's Tale Brewery
8920 Vernon Ave #122, Montclair
www.dragonstalebrewery.com

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

Euryale Brewing Co
2060 Chicago Ave #A-17, Riverside
euryalebrewing.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 Dr, Redlands
hangar24brewery.com

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

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

Last Name Brewing
2120 Porterfield Way, Upland
lastnamebrewing.com

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

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

Old Stump Brewing Co.
2896 Metropolitan Pl, Pomona
oldstumpbrewery.com

Packhouse 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
rokhousebrewing.com

Skyland Ale Works
1869 Pomona Rd Unit E/F, Corona
skylandaleworks.com

Solorio Brewing Company
9395 Feron Blvd Suite K, Rancho Cucamonga
soloriobrewing.com

Sour Cellars Brewery
9495 E 9th St Unit B, Rancho Cucamonga
www.sourcellars.com

Stone Church Brewing
2785 Cabot Dr Suite 160, Corona
stonechurchbrewing.com

Strum Brewing
235 S Campus Ave, Ontario
www.strumbrewing.com

Thompson Brewing
9900 Indiana Ave Suite 7, Riverside
thompsonbrewing.com

Wiens Brewing
27941 Diaz Rd, Temecula
Wiensbrewing.com

BREW PUBS

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

Wicks Brewing Company
11620 Sterling Ave, Riverside
wicksbrewing.com



PILS AND LOVE

SATURDAY JULY 28 2018 | 11AM - 4PM

THE PROPAGATOR, MARINA DEL REY, CA

40+ BREWERIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD COME TOGETHER IN ONE PLACE
TO POUR ONLY PILSNER AND TO CELEBRATE THE STYLE.
AN EVENT CREATED BY BIRRIFICIO ITALIANO.

TICKETS \$60

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