

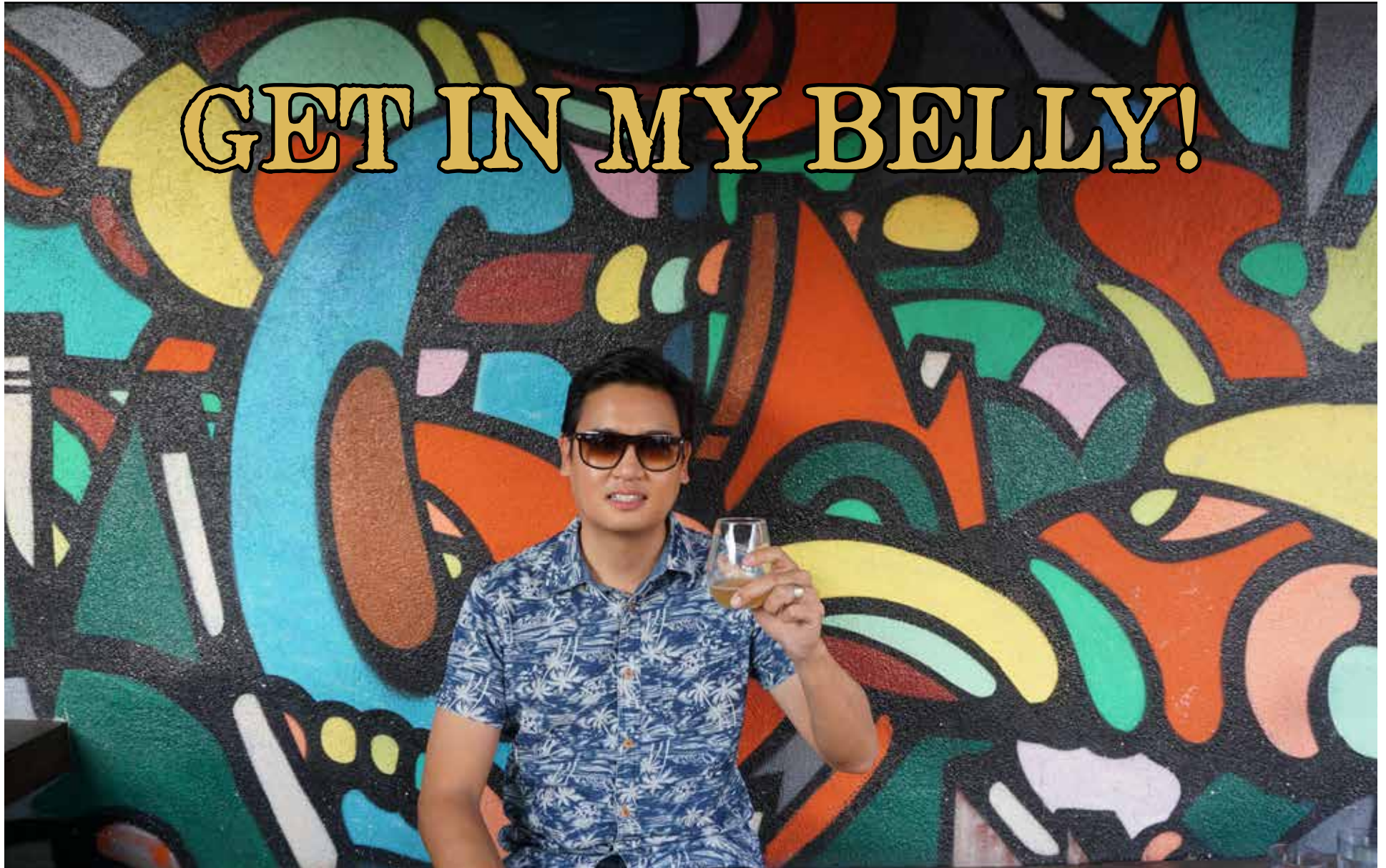
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Jimmy Han, owner of Beer Belly.

Photo Credit: Daniel Drennon

## By Daniel Drennon

Jimmy Han's eclectic bars reflect who he is: A native Angeleno whose very personality is formed by the events and history of L.A. From his long-running One Night Stand brewery nights to some of the best food in the beer biz, Han has established himself as one of L.A.'s craft pioneers. A trend-setter. A leader.

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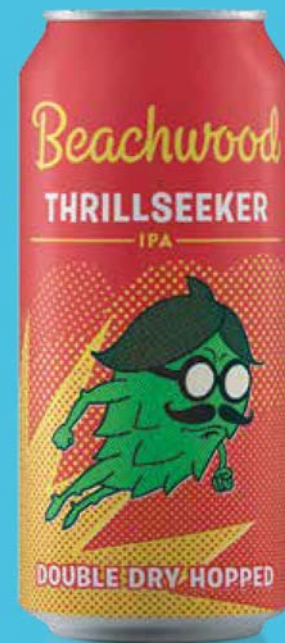
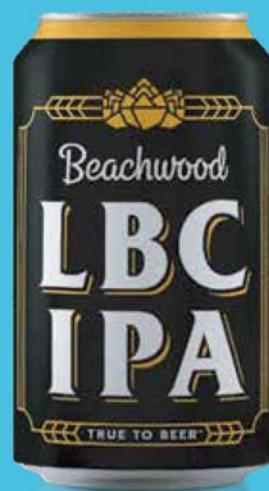
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## PINTS &amp; QUOTES

# THE LINES IN THE SAND WILL BE WASHED AWAY BY THE WAVES

by JOHN M. VERIVE

It's that time of year again. While the rest of the country bemoans the shortening days and the approaching autumn cooldown, L.A. girds itself for another couple months of hot weather (not to mention the dry winds and wildfires that accompany our second summer). In the beer-world, the talk turns to pumpkin beers, Oktoberfest lagers, and the most gabbed-about topic: M&E activity.

It's buyout season, and this year the action is close to home, though with a different shade than acquisition of Golden Road, Ballast Point or Lagunitas in years past. In mid-July, Inglewood's own Three Weavers Brewing announced a "partnership with" (read: sold a stake to) CANarchy. (The private equity funded umbrella group is anchored by Oskar Blues and also includes Cigar City Brewing, Deep Ellum, Perrin Brewing and a pair of Utah breweries: Wasatch and Squatters, and they are expanding aggressively.) While it wasn't a monolithic macro-brewing company that opened up its purse this time, the self-described "disruptive collective of brewers..." acting "in the name of independent craft beer" poses its own questions to the craft beer faithful. This murky flow of private equity money into the craft beer industry powers the machine of beer punditry like nothing else has recently.

There's a recent trend of breathless opinion pieces and acerbic hot-takes on who actually owns these breweries, and why it matters or doesn't matter, and why drawing lines is pointless or is important to the spiritual health of the plucky industry that's valiantly fought the goliath beer companies for three decades. One recent piece by Aaron Goldfarb on Vinepair (<https://vinepair.com/articles/us-vs-them-all-over-again>) asked "what does 'Us versus Them' even mean anymore?" (while offering no real answers), and a post on The Full Pint by Lew Bison (<https://thefullpint.com/editorial/it-quacks-like-a-duck-thoughts-on-canarchy>) posed a similar question but with an air of libertarian "you do you"

equivocation. My reaction to both pieces was similar: why are we even talking about this? Which isn't to take anything away from those stories — while I don't always agree with those writers, I respect them both greatly, and the pieces are worth your time if you're interested in this kind of inside-baseball conversation.

But we the beer drinkers and the beer thinkers alike should be talking more about the beer and less about the business. If it truly is the liquid in the glass that matters, can we please talk intelligently and freely about the liquid? (Ideally, without fear of hurt feelings when you have something less than glowing to say about a local beer or brewery.)



*The Obfuscation of Craft Beer.*

It's disheartening to see the conversation about ethical consumerism within craft beer turn into bickering about where the line is drawn and who exactly is on which side of that line. It seems the arguments about why craft drinkers should care about where their beer comes from, and who pockets those profits, have been made, and now we're left with beer punditry seemingly for the sake of punditry. As far as I'm concerned, the news that Three Weavers "sold out" or whatever you want to call it was just that: a news story. It happened, no one was surprised by it, here are the facts of the deal and maybe what to expect. Why do the craft beer commentators moralize the decision and use the news to reload their rhetorical weapons

in this lingering culture war waged among the beer community?

Obvious answer is obvious: because it "drives engagement." Engagement and conversation and clicks and retweets and the swelling of virtual value when opinion is commodified. But does it do anything to help improve beer culture, or educate drinkers, or to make the beer that we are all drinking better? For me, increasingly, these conversations don't amount to much more than screaming into crashing waves.

To the beer drinkers who cavalierly drink independent breweries alongside the faux-craft, "crafty," zombi-craft and other brews that sit on the

To the independent brewery owners who are now bristling at all the details I overlooked and all the reasons that their independence is so righteous I say: yes, we get it. You live and breathe your company and you bleed for your brand. Big beer is "Evil" and their business practices are unethical and often flatly criminal. It is frankly tedious to hear about it all the damn time. You started a business in an industry where you knew you'd be an underdog and now you're baying about how unfair the industry is. When has business ever been fair? Bite back or roll over, but quit barking about it. Take one half the energy that you use to evangelize for independence in beer and divert that into making your beer better and better educating the drinkers in your community. Yes, you can do a better job at both of those things.

There is some flat out terrible, nigh undrinkable beer being made and sold to great fanfare in Los Angeles right now. That is a problem of much greater magnitude than who owns which brewery. The only thing that will keep craft beer growing and thriving is to increase the quality of the beer being made in our community.

As tired as I am with the haze-craze conversation, I would much rather talk about the relative merits and pitfalls of the popular style than have another discussion about the evils of big beer. The business of craft beer is not exciting to anyone but the kinds of entrepreneurs that the craft partisans don't want coming near breweries. You know what is exciting? Brut IPAs and new strains of yeast and the maturation of wine/beer hybrids and making beer in your own kitchen or garage. Let's talk about that.

*John Verive is 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](http://www.BeerofTomorrow.com)), and he covers the beer-beat for the Los Angeles Times. Find him on Twitter and Instagram at @octopushat and @beeroftomorrow.*

*Photo Credit: Daniel Drennon*

blurred-line of "us versus them" I say: whatever. Maybe give some thought to where your beer money is going to, whose salary it pays, and how much is staying in your own community.

To the drinkers dedicated to the independent spirit that underlies the craft beer industry, those who turn their nose up at Kraft-with-a-K breweries designed to look and taste like "real" craft beer and who turn their wallets out for the local underdog I say: keep it up (but maybe shut up about it — or at least turn down the volume of your rhetoric). You're better off trying to turn a beer-averse friend on to the flavorful world of modern beer than to convince a cavalier beer drinker to crusade against whatever you're defining as "them."





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## WISHFUL DRINKING

# TORTUGO DIARY

## JOE KOVACH & HIS TEENAGE MUTANT BREWERY TORTOISE

by TOMM CARROLL

Every new brewery has a backstory. And this is the one for Tortugo Brewing, which opened the end of June on Hyde Park Boulevard in Inglewood, the city's second production brewery/tasting room.

Back in 2005, a young, budding herpetologist (a studier of reptiles and amphibians) in Pittsburgh named Joe Kovach started homebrewing. First, it was malt extract kits, then clones of his favorite beers, then original recipes, and then an epiphany: He wanted to brew more and to work in beer. So he started helping out at the city's South Hills Homebrew shop, which didn't pay much but gave him all the brewing ingredients he could want. Soon, he had given up most of his collection of snakes, alligators, etc., and was brewing two or three batches a week and having friends over to his house to help him drink it all.

"I really fell in love with the culture and the camaraderie of beer," Kovach explains. "Just seeing how it brings people together only further solidified that I needed to do this with my life." By then he had gotten another part-time job on the packing line at Pittsburgh's Penn Brewery, but he knew that as a young guy he'd never get a chance to brew there. "I was in a big transitional period in my life, and the day after my 22 birthday, I came out to LA to visit my brother, who was then living in Venice Beach," he recalls. "And I met all these people who were as excited about making and

talking about beer as I was." Many of those folks were members of the Culver City-based homebrew club Pacific Gravity, which he later joined.

He had this gut feeling that wouldn't go away. And when he went to LAX to fly home, Kovach says, he just couldn't get on the plane. "I skipped my flight, I called my boss and said, 'Hey, I've got a couple of interviews to work in beer out in LA, and you know that's my dream; I'll be back in a week.' My boss said, 'Well, you might not have a job...' I said, 'You just made this easier. If I need a job when I come back, I'll call you.' I never called him back."

Kovach stayed in town for a week for some interviews, including with Greg Beron and Kevin Koenig, co-owners of the Culver Homebrew Supply shop, and was quickly hired. He was moving to LA! But before he started the gig, he went home to Pittsburgh to pick up some clothes and Annie, his beloved tortoise — the last of his reptilian pets, which he had acquired the year he got into beer, and the one that would prove to be the inspiration for, and namesake of, his dream venture: opening his own brewery, called Tortuga (Spanish for tortoise or turtle).

Kovach soon scored a job as a buyer for Whole Foods. "I needed that job to figure out who the good distributors were out here in LA 'cause I knew if I was gonna work here I needed to fill out my resume," he says, reflecting



Tortugo Brewing's Joe Kovach and Annie.

Courtesy of Tortugo Brewing

on his career path. "I'd had a lot of brewing experience but I hadn't had any sales and marketing experience. That's how I ended up at Beauchamp Distributing for six years," where he served as a sales rep and an on-premise supervisor.

But during that period, he began to get antsy again. "I started getting really comfortable and that scared the crap out of me," Kovach concedes. "I'd never forgive myself if I didn't go for it — and that's when I got really serious and wrote my business plan. I really gave serious thought about what I wanted, how I wanted to bring a brand to market, what kind of brand, and just what Tortuga would be."

Among his informal advisors or mentors, Kovach names Alan Newman of Magic Hat Brewing and Alchemy & Science, Sam Calagione of Dogfish Head, Dieter Foerstner of Angel City, and Yuseff Cherney, Chris Klein and others from the (pre-Constellation Brands buyout) Ballast Point. "Those people took me under their wings and were always willing to talk and help me out a lot," he says.

After finding a silent partner as a private investor, Kovach began working on building his brewery on the side for the last year and a half

that he was still at Beauchamp. "It was the hardest thing; I couldn't tell any of my friends that I'd signed a lease on a building, ordered equipment and filed all my federal paperwork," he confesses. "I wasn't sure how my company would react. If I didn't do it that way, I knew I'd be homeless. I couldn't lose that job and be unemployed."

There finally came a point that Kovach needed to be on site of the new brewery because construction was in its final phase, so he gave Beauchamp one month's notice, leaving the distributor at the end of June 2017 to oversee the finishing of his dream project full-time. One year later, it opened to the public.

### Tortugo Today

A large, day-glo orange-colored, corrugated metal building with electric blue lettering, Tortugo Brewing is hard to miss on the otherwise unassuming Inglewood street. It was previously a woodworking factory. Inside, the spacious 6,600-square-foot facility sports a festive island-y feel with the indoor taproom bar wrapping around to a partially covered outdoor area (flat-screen TVs above both), and the corrugated metal theme continuing throughout, while barrels hover over

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*Tortoise shaped wooden taster tray.*  
Photo Credit: Tomm Carroll

the entrance, each bearing a letter of the brewery's name.

Currently, there are six core Tortugo beers on tap: the standout Isabel Belgian White with fruity notes from German chamomile flowers, Cristóbal Lager made with maize, the tropical-flavored Kicker Rock IPA, the Amarillo- and Citra-finished Unfiltered Pale Ale, a Robust Porter (which Kovach calls a "happy accident" because it started as a Red Ale) and the decadent Chocolate Raspberry Imperial Porter (which clocks in at 9.8% abv and is sprinkled with cocoa powder on the head, which accentuates the chocolate malt and softens the berry sweetness). Flights are served on a tortoise-shaped wooden taster tray.

In the production space, which is well lit by multiple skylights, the hardware includes a 15 bbl brewhouse, 20 bbl mash tun, 45 bbl hot liquor tank, 30 bbl cold liquor tank, and multiple fermenters: two 7 bbl, four 15 bbl, and two 30 bbl, as well as two 8 bbl square open fermenters in a separate, dedicated open fermentation room. There's also another entirely closed room for mixed fermentation, with 12-foot ceilings to accommodate barrels and foeders. Both of these separate spaces have their own forced air system, air filters, internal drains, sanitary hard lines built into the walls, CO2, water, and power — so nothing cross-contaminates. Oh yeah, and there's plenty of room to more than double the fermentation capacity in the brewery.

"This whole brewery is really built to challenge me to be a better brewer," Kovach explains. "And now I have the facility to try different styles and different techniques to really grow."

The corner of the production space near the taproom also has something that no other brewery does: a makeshift tortoise pen, complete with a little house, for 15-year-old Annie, who weighs 45 pounds, to wander around (and attempt to escape



*Barrels hover over Tortugo's taproom entrance.*

*Photo Credit: Tomm Carroll*

from) while keeping an eye on the proceedings during open-to-public hours, which are Friday-Saturday noon-midnight and Sunday noon-6:00 p.m., with Thursday hours coming soon.

**What's in a Name?**

Now about that name (and no, it's not a typo)... Kovach reveals that his trademark attorney refused to approve the name "Tortuga" for his brewery because there is a company called Tortuga Rum Cakes. "I'm like, 'But I'm not making cakes. Or rum,'" the brewer says he protested. "And the attorney said, 'I'm still not gonna approve it. It's not a conflicting trademark now, but it could be in the future because some breweries choose to make liquor.'" So the name had to be changed to "Tortugo" — "which is not even a word!" Kovach scoffs. It does not denote a male tortoise;

"Tortuga" is used for both genders.

Coincidentally (or maybe not), shortly after he lost the trademark bid for the name Tortuga, Kovach says he walked out to Annie's pen in his backyard and was shocked at what he saw beneath the tortoise, which he has owned and cared for since 2005. "I said, 'Wait a second, *that's* not supposed to be there..." Let's put it this way: Annie turned out to be very well hung. And aroused.

Gender identities aside, ¡Viva Tortugo!

*Award-winning beer writer Tomm Carroll is a longtime contributor to Celebrator Beer News. As a 14-year member of Pacific Gravity, he is one of those people Joe Kovach talked to about beer when the Pittsburgher moved to LA, and has followed Joe's journey to open a local brewery since then. Contact him at beerscribe@earthlink.net.*

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## THE BENNETT BEAT

# TAPS OPENS BREWERY IN TUSTIN USHERING IN A NEW ERA FOR PIONEERING BREWPUB

by SARAH BENNETT



The taps at TAPS.

Photo Credit: Daniel Drennon

The last four years have been an emotional roller coaster for Kyle Manns, Director of Brewing Operations for TAPS Fish House & Brewery, the pioneering Orange County brewpub chain and one of the most decorated craft beer brands in the country.

Despite the popularity of TAPS' expertly made old-world styles (made famous at the original restaurants in Brea and Corona), Manns knew the fine-dining reputation needed an update -- and a production brewery -- if it was ever going to thrive in today's competitive beer industry. It was all easier said than done.

"There are people in O.C. who don't know who TAPS is," says Manns, a veteran of the 19-year-old TAPS chain,

who returned to the company in 2014 after helping launch Bottle Logic Brewing in Placentia. "For those who do know us, it's always like, 'TAPS isn't cool,' 'Taps is boring,' or 'Oh, that's the lager guys.' Now, we're in a good position to change that mentality of TAPS as being the old brand."

In order to change that mentality, though, Manns, his brew team and TAPS' ownership went through three potential locations in as many years, signing leases, mapping brewhouse layouts, considering kitchen sizes and being generally strung along by landlords at each until every suitable site in the county had been exhausted.

Accustomed to operating brewpubs that put a fine dining food experience first and quality beer second, the

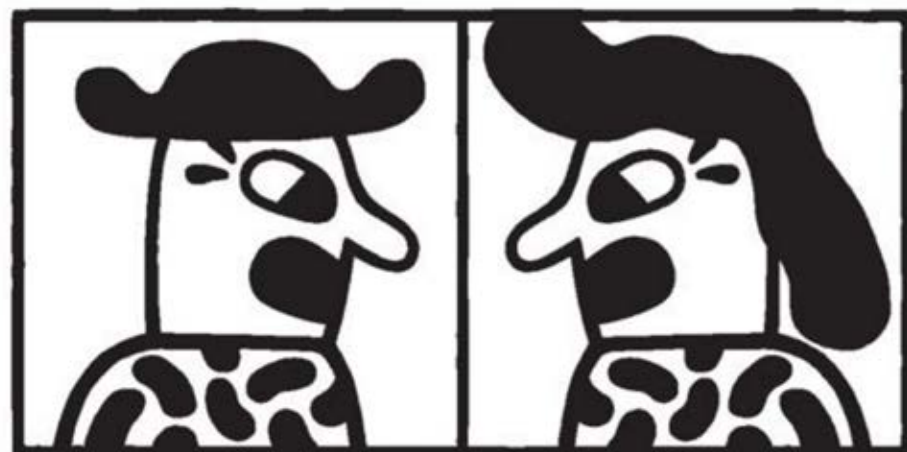
owners were looking at retail locations with high foot traffic and zoning for on-site food service; no bland office-park breweries would be considered. Then, in desperation, Manns clicked the "mixed use" button on LoopNet, a database of commercial real estate for sale, hoping to find something in between.

When he drove past the light industrial building hugging a corner space on Red Hill Avenue in Tustin, sparks flew.

"As soon as I saw the place, I knew how it was going down," he says. After four long years, the TAPS Brewery & Barrel Room finally opened last month, giving Manns -- a former recording engineer and producer -- the creative playground he's been craving in order to reinvent and reinvigorate the historic craft beer brand.

Instead of white tablecloths, pricey steak dinners and pints of the same seasonal styles that have been available for nearly two decades like you'll find at the TAPS Fish House & Brewery in Corona (the original Brea location recently removed its tablecloths as part of a more casual approach), the new TAPS Brewery in Tustin is a neighborhood brewery and taproom, albeit with TAPS' signature refined approach.

From the outside, it looks almost like a tech company's corporate office: multiple stories of contemporary construction on the corner of a main thoroughfare (plastered with a re-designed modern logo); a patio flush with yard games, fire pits and string lights; and a food truck permanently parked outside proclaiming "good eats," "craft beer" and "vibes."



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TAPS brewers Maxwell Jones, Jon Chiusano, Kyle Manns and Brennan Perry. Photo Credit: Daniel Drennon

Inside, the tasting room is reminiscent of the upscale brewpub interiors but with industrial touches. Think: a dark wood bar, arched brick walls and galvanized pipe lights. Windows stretch along the back walls, exposing both the shiny 19,000 square foot brewhouse (which even with a brand new system and a half dozen tanks inside, feels nearly empty) and the 350-barrel capacity temperature-controlled barrel room, which will soon be filled with new batches of the popular barrel-aged imperial stout Remy, which production limitations took out of production for a few years.

On one wall in the tasting room is a trio of iPads where you can order food from the gourmet truck outside. The brainchild of TAPS chef de cuisine Roman Jimenez, it offers affordable and creative pub food that reflects the diversity of the region, from bulgogi beef masa fries to bánh mì bacon-wrapped hot dogs to veggie burgers.

“With the restaurants, it was always beer second, food first,” Manns says. “Beer was always secondary all the way until we opened these doors. But here, it’s beer first and food second, which opens us up to so many possibilities. There’s nothing about TAPS the way it used to be in terms of our beer program.”

Opening taplists at the new TAPS Brewery are almost unrecognizable to anyone who’s ordered a beer at one of the TAPS Fish House & Breweries over the years. Known for its dedication to multiple award-winning German styles like Kolsch, Doppelbock, Pilsner and other clean, food-friendly beers (all spearheaded by longtime former brewmaster Victor Novak), newer styles like IPAs

and adjunct beers were virtually nonexistent.

Now, along with the requisite lagers and stouts, about half of the lineup at the Tustin taproom are IPAs, from hazy to sessionable to brut.

In a few months, once production gets up and running full steam, expect to see bottles of year-round beers on retail shelves across Orange County. Manns also hopes to see kegs going into wider distribution so people don’t have to come to the restaurants or even the brewery to drink their beers. Add to that more TAPS Brewery barrel rooms and more experimental beers, and it’s safe to say that the era of TAPS as the un-cool, lager-only brewery is over.

“This whole operation was set up with adaptability in mind because the only thing we know is 19 years of our brewpub history, which is completely irrelevant to this facility and to distribution,” Manns says.

“Everything we’ve set out to do in last four years was to do a complete 180 while not forgetting our past and heritage. Like our new mission statement says: ‘with a nod to the past and an eye on the future.’ You can’t forget the past but you can’t live in it either. That’s something very important to us and to the new TAPS.”

*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.*



Multiple winner of GABF Brewpub of the Year.

Photo Credit: Daniel Drennon

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## COVER STORY

## GET IN MY BELLY!

by DANIEL DRENNON

What I really mean to say is, “Get in Jimmy Han’s Beer Belly!” The original seven-year old Beer Belly is in Koreatown. Younger sibling Belly is in downtown Long Beach and features a hidden Tiki Bar in the back. And Jimmy Han? He’s just cool. Stylish. Laid back. But sharp. Business savvy. People smart.

His eclectic bars reflect who he is: A native Angeleno whose very personality is formed by the events and history of LA. From his long-running One Night Stand brewery nights to some of the best food in the beer biz, Han has established himself as one of LA’s craft pioneers. A trend-setter. A leader.

**DRENNON:** *Where did you grow up and how did it impact who you are today?*

HAN: I was born and raised in Los Angeles so the history of LA definitely shaped who I am. I was primarily raised in Koreatown and to see the landscape develop to one of the most dense and electric nightlife areas has been fun. Everything from the Northridge Earthquake to the LA Riots were very eye-opening for me, and watching people band together and rebuild after such big disasters really shaped how I viewed community.

*Where did you go to school and what did you study?*

I bounced around a couple private schools in Koreatown before going into the LAUSD public schools in the 4th grade. I started at Roscomare Elementary in Bel-Air and then got into the Gifted And Talented Enrichment G.A.T.E. program and then eventually into the Highly Gifted Magnet program. I only got into the GATE program because I was such a trouble-maker and they tested me to see if I was either mentally-challenged or bored. I’m glad I ended up having a good reason for being a trouble-maker.

I finished 6th Grade at San Jose elementary in Mission Hills and Middle School at Portola in Tarzana. The Magnet schools were in the San Fernando Valley so I would get bussed



Jimmy Han and our mutual friends.

Photo Credit: Daniel Drennon

up from Koreatown. Being in school with everyone from the smartest of kids to the less fortunate families definitely opened up my eyes to real world life. Like losing my backpack with all my school gear and my Walkman on the first day of school in 7th grade. That’s when I learned to never let my stuff out of my sight. And then the rough LA street life continued until I went to college. I went to Bravo

Medical Magnet High School next to LA County Hospital and then Fairfax High for my senior year.

Bravo was a brand new school at that time and I thought I might be interested in the medical field. Senior year in Fairfax was so I could ditch everyday with my best friends and get into trouble. I was basically done with all my high school studying and college testing by senior year. Then

I ended up going to UC Riverside and bounced around a bunch of majors until I finished with a BA in Psychology on the 5-year program. I almost dropped out of college because I wanted to start working in real estate but I decided to finish for my parents. I thought that even if I made a bunch of money and bought them nice things like a car or house, it still wouldn’t be as meaningful to them as handing them a college diploma. I’m glad with the decision I made.

*Did you know early on you wanted to be a restaurateur and bar owner or was that a happy accident?*

I think growing up in Los Angeles and partying in K-town my whole life, I always dreamed of owning a club or bar. I always thought it would be a sports bar. We still need a legit one in Koreatown. But I also believe in following your passion and at the time, I was just more passionate about craft beer than anything else. I thought about a wine bar or a champagne bar or a Korean fusion bar. But the more and more I got into the local beer community, it was a no-brainer. I wanted a craft beer bar.

*So obviously you fell in love with craft beer at some point. When was that?*

One of the aha moments was when I was sitting drinking an Anchor Steam and reading the bottle about their process for Steam Beer. I found it so interesting about the different brewing process that made my Anchor Steam beer so tasty. So I decided to dive into the rabbit hole a lot more often and seek out as many different styles and beers as I could. Soon after I had a daily ritual of sitting down in solitude with a new beer, poured into my favorite glass, and enjoying, smelling, looking, tasting, and mouth-feeling my beer into tasting notes and also reading about what other people thought about the same beer on Beer Advocate. It was almost meditative and spiritual but also very educational and enlightening. The buzz was a nice perk as well.

*How did you come up with the idea for Beer Belly and, of course, the cool name?*

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Daniel Drennon and Jimmy Han.

Courtesy of Beer Belly

After we had decided to open a craft beer bar, there were a bunch of names at the top of list like The Library, or The Barn, or my personal favorite, 99 bottles. But no matter which name I'd imagine sticking with, they all got old and played out after a couple weeks. But there was one name that I never got tired of. Beer Belly. It was playful and felt right.

***Had there been other breweries, brewpubs or beer bars that inspired you?***

The original craft beer bars in LA were extremely inspirational to me. They proved to me that it could be done and still be very cool. The OG's for me are Father's Office, Verdugo Bar, Surly Goat, Tony's Darts Away, Blue Palms and 33 Degrees Alehouse.

***Beer Belly in Koreatown is one of our older craft joints at a whopping seven years old. How have you seen the beer scene in LA evolve over that time?***

7 years old on May 20th. I really really wanted to open on April 20th, 2011, but we got delayed a month. When we first opened in 2011 in Koreatown, most of our customers didn't know what an IPA was. Now they only drink

hazies! JK. But watching the local craft scene explode into what it is today is bonkers. In 2011, there wasn't enough local beer being made to keep all 12 of our taps hyper-local. Now there's so much beer available that it's hard to get all the good beer on a regular rotation!

***You opened a second Belly in downtown Long Beach. Why?***

We chose Long Beach because of the strong community there. People are so proud to be from Long Beach. They're like, "We aren't from LA, we aren't from OC... WE'RE FROM LONG BEACH!" And I'm all about that kind of community. There are also a lot of beer industry people that live in Long Beach. I took that as a sign. And being next to arguably the best brewery Beachwood and The Blendery on the "Barley Block" was the deal-closer for me.

***You bought Frank N Hanks a few years back and also curate the craft beer program for Coachella as well as the annual Eat Drink Vegan festival. Seems like a helluva lot of work!***

(GET IN MY BELLY! continued on page 14)

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Hophead Jim.

Photo Credit: Daniel Drennon



Han at Frank N Hanks.

Photo Credit: Daniel Drennon

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(GET IN MY BELLY! continued)

I've been fortunate to take the things that I've learned from Beer Belly and parlay that into things like a dive-bar by Beer Belly in Koreatown called Frank N Hanks and a Tiki Bar in the back of BB Long Beach and curating craft beer and beverages for Goldenvoice festivals like Coachella and Eat Drink Vegan. It's an honor to take this craft beer journey and continue to do what I love. The latest project is being invited to open a food and beer stand in the new LAFC Los Angeles Football Club stadium, Banc of California Stadium, in downtown Los Angeles. It's a beautiful stadium designed by Gensler and having a new soccer team in LA has been quite the experience. I was lucky enough to be allowed to curate a small craft beer list even though big beer companies have huge sponsorships in the stadium.

Similar to festivals, it's always nice to see something carved out for local independent breweries and to be able to have some market place for consumers in the important fight against corporate big beer. Watching LAFC build their home and club from the ground up reminds me a lot of how the local craft beer scene was built. The community starts in the streets and is inclusive of everyone. People get together and gather around the things they are passionate about. Doesn't matter what you do and where you came from. It's down-to-earth, very welcoming, and a strong sense of community. Even beyond the amazing fruited sours and the hoppy pilsners, I'm thankful for all the people that I have met along the way and I'm honored to call all these people my friends, family, community.

That's so LA.



Han and the Reservoir Dogs.

Photo Credit: Daniel Drennon



One Night Stand with Indie Brewing.

Photo Credit: Daniel Drennon





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## BREWER'S CORNER

# WHAT'S ALIVE IN YOUR BOTTLE?

by WHIT BAKER

There are an increasingly broad amount of ways to make sour beer and with those come a myriad of ways to market your sour beer to the public. But do the words and/or the price charged for sour beer accurately reflect the amount of time and patience put into making the beer? Some people charge a LOT of money for kettle sours, beer with dead bacteria and a normal beer fermentation in the beer. Others, myself included, will try to charge as little as possible for time-intensive styles, like 100% wood fermented beer or beer that has been aged for upwards of two years before it gets into the customer's hand. In the same vein, some brewers without koelschips will put the most inflammatory of words (to a sour nerd, anyway) on their bottle, like "spontaneous," and just behind that "lambic." For me personally, I tend to breakdown the entire category of sour beer and deciphering techniques by what ends up alive in your bottle. By this I mean what is dormant or not purposefully killed before putting your beer into a bottle and if bottle conditioning happens, what does the bottle conditioning?

"Kettle Sours"

These beers are typically produced by using lactobacillus at a high temperature and then by killing that lacto. This is approximating the germane Berliner-wiesse tradition, although historically, a portion of the wort was soured all the way and blended back at packaging. Typically, these are dry hopped or fruited beers

and if expensively priced, they typically have a bounty of real fruit in them.

**Do Use:** Kettle Sour or American Kettle Sour, tart wheat ale/lager, Berliner wiesse-STYLE, Gose-STYLE.

**Don't Use:** spontaneous, lambic, mixed fermentation, Berliner weisse (unless made in Berlin), Gose (Unless made in Goslar/Leipzig)...although this seems to be fairly common place and more acceptable.

"Non-Pasteurized Mixed Fermentation"

This category basically means you used two or more microbes (hopefully on purpose) and all of them are alive/dormant in the bottle. From here you can either force carbonate, prime with the native bugs, or use a new yeast to prime. These beers typically take more than a month to get to the customer and thus tend to be sold for more money. These beers age well as there are things the microbes do to the beer over time while the brett (present in most of this type) will keep the beer from getting oxidized for quite some time. In addition, if the beer is conditioned on the native microflora or force carbonated, there is a good chance that homebrewers can culture the dregs of these bottles to make sour beer at home. With the addition of wine yeast, this becomes much more complicated and microbiological lab work is required.

**Do Use:** Blended Sour ale, Brett Beer



Whit Baker.

Photo Cedit: Katie Baker

**Don't Use:** Oak Aged Ale, some Belgians do this, but is vague for American consumers with BBA stouts and such. Lambic, I don't care if you used a "lambic blend" from a yeast lab. If you added a yeast, you aren't making lambic or Gueuze.

"Pasteurized Mixed Fermentation"

These beers are just like the ones above but the brewer/brewery has decided to "lock in" the flavors by pasteurizing the beer and killing all of the microbes in the beer. This means that the consumer will get to taste almost identically what the blender/brewer was tasting. The downside is it will only change by getting oxidized over time (there is no live brett) and it is typically best to drink fresh. Monikers under this type should be similar to unpasteurized, but a point should be made to let people know that the beer has nothing living in it.

Basically, US brewers are probably never going to be able to make lambic or gueuze due to the regionally specific methods and length of time people in Brussels have been doing it, not to mention climate change (see methode traditionnelle) but they can make spontaneous beers, and "spontaneous"

beer should never have been touched by lab yeast. A spontaneous beer is not something that happens by accident or by pitching a controlled amount of bugs into. Most people attempting such beers are already hip to the process of naming and marketing these beers, but there are brewers who are adding words that don't reflect their process to their beers.

In my opinion, it is always best for the craft beer industry as a whole if the words used to market beer to the consumers accurately reflects the processes used in the production of that beer. When customers are misled, either intentionally or unintentionally, they are the ones whose misconceptions will make or break future beers of that style. Also, as a rule, if a style is named for a place AND you aren't brewing in that place, add "-style."

*Whit Baker is the Brewmaster at Bond Brothers Beer Company in Cary, NC. He holds a certified rank as a beer judge from the Beer Judge Certification Program and is also an Advanced Cicerone. Bond Brothers won the 2017 GABF silver medal for American Sour Beer.*

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## YAEGER SHOTS

# CARPINTERIA IS THE GRUIT & JUN CAPITAL

by BRIAN YAEGER

The Apiary and brewLAB share three things—a wall, a keg washer and a four head bottle filler—or four if you count a crowd of fermentation fans eager to explore the cutting edge of their products (mead and beer, respectively). Sounds like an incredible destination, right? But first, you have to find them.

Just south of Santa Barbara, there's the high-falutin enclave of Montecito and the low-falutin city of Carpinteria. It's mostly a surf spot with renowned Rincon Point for the shredders and a beach break gifted to beginners known as Santa Claus Lane. It's also hailed as the Avocado Capital with the 32nd annual Avocado Festival going down the first weekend of October. As such, Carp, as it's known, doesn't have anything like Santa Barbara's "State Street Crawl" of endless pubs. That's not to say Carpinteria is brewery-less. It's just that two of the three—Island Brewing founded in 2011 and Rincon Brewpub founded in 2014—have higher visibility and larger capacities. By comparison, when brewLAB celebrates its fourth anniversary on September 29, only about 44 merrymakers can attend and that includes the cozy (small) patio up front.

If there's one hallmark of brewLAB's beers it's that they're experimental. That's what you'd expect from a homebrewing duo who really didn't repeat recipes in the decade prior to opening their one-and-a-half-barrel nanobrewery. Peter Goldammer and Steve Jamie—the former dons a goatee and the latter sports a beard—are painfully aware they need to keep a pair of IPAs on tap but almost always have a gruit available, too. During my recent visit, they had a Brett saison with locally-grown loquats, a rye coffee saison on nitro, and in case you think you've had one Sahti (even most beer lovers haven't) therefore you've had them all, brewLAB's is made with Cypress tips.

As Goldammer puts it, "I don't want to equate it to the extreme like we're throwing shit against the wall because I feel like we have a calculated angle that we're going at." Yeah. They'd never go bonkers with a whole 45-gallon batch; for that they use their pilot system, brewing up ten-gallon batches.

Two of the people who routinely came in to partake of these what-if beers were area natives Nole Cosart and Rashna Hailey, partners in both life and business. Cosart was already



Nole Cosart of The Apiary.

Photo Credit: Brian Yaeger

making a go of making jun. If you're unfamiliar with that beverage as I was, no need to Google it, it's kombucha made with honey as the fermentable sugar (instead of the industry standard sucrose.) The duo opened The Apiary two years ago. The tasting room, open daily, has dried roses hanging about and plenty of other decorative flora including jars of herbs. The bar's backsplash features honeycomb tiles, because honeycomb.

With their requisite winery license, The Apiary now makes a wide range of dry, sparkling meads and some ciders flowing from a dozen handles but always has at least one iteration of jun on tap. The standard Jun, made

with local orange blossom honey and a jasmine green tea as the base, packs a featherweight 2 percent alcohol and is as delicious and refreshing as a Ball jar of mead pulled right from your fridge (assuming you're a talented fermenter). Curcumin is their jun made with turmeric, white pepper, and ginger is equally tasty with a brilliant orange fuzz from the turmeric that hazy IPA fans would want to Instagram it. The Juns are so sessionable they're "alcoholic" the way Tabasco's "spicy."

Meads and ciders are perhaps extra popular given the surge of gluten-free products, but again, Cosart and Hailey found this manufacturing corner of



Mead Me in the Middle bottles.

Photo Credit: Brian Yaeger

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*brewLAB and The Apiary collab.*

*Photo Credit: Brian Yaeger*

Carpinteria through glutinous beer. (I said glutinous. If you want gluttonous, brewLAB's other wall is shared by Rori Ice Cream with scoop shops from Santa Barbara to Santa Monica but you can't get a cone here. If you time it right, Rori Trovato herself will happily sell you a frosty pint.) Cosart's entry was via honey, enamored of the "relationship with bees and bee products. Honey bees," he preaches, "are such mesmerizing creatures." Don't even get him started on propolis. Having previously worked in hospitals, he grows wide-eyed when discussing how honey, naturally anti-septic, is approved for hospital use and take that, pharmaceutical industry!

When patrons come in to sample through Apiary's meads, sometimes for the first taste of this honeyed elixir, they're steered toward something straightforward like Darkest Flower made with 100 percent avocado blossom honey that, fear not, tastes more like molasses than guacamole. (All of Apiary's honeys come from three hyper-local purveyors.) Yet

they're "always looking for things that are blooming," says Cosart, which is how Pink Jasmine came about, which smells just like a Santa Barbara summer night. "Rashna is a low-key botanist and went to culinary school training in herbalism." Still, Cosart's favorite of his own creations is Le Juice, the name for the mead dry-hopped with rotating varieties of beer's best bud.

"It doesn't sell that well because people come here to escape beer and hops."

Not so next door at brewLAB. No matter how many intriguing offerings are on the board, every brewery owner knows there's a large swath of consumers who order an IPA without looking at the board. And that's...OK. Goldammer and Jamie will continue to make hop-forward beers. And continue to forge ahead (and forage ahead since Goldammer lives on a ranch and Jamie maintains an extensive home garden) with new recipes. They brew roughly 100 different beers each year.



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It should come as no surprise that brewLAB and The Apiary have collaborated on a braggot—half beer, half mead—called Mead Me in the Middle. It came out early 2017 but some bottles remain available and the barrel-aged braggot holds up fantastically. It offers complimentary notes of dry white wine, earthy saison, and a mug of chamomile tea sipped in a spring garden. It's one of the best uses of that four-head bottle filler that doesn't get a lot of use since both businesses are nearly exclusively draft-only and rarely get to fulfill requests from off-premise retailers. But that's

why both brewLAB and The Apiary are looking to expand production. When that happens, that ought to result in a few more errant kegs making their way to Santa Barbara or Ventura, but your best bet to try what they're up to will still be right here in Carp.

*Brian Yaeger is the author of Red, White, and Brew and contributed to the Oxford Companion to Beer. If he's not writing for beer publications he's planning beer festivals. Along with his wife and son (I.P. Yae) he recently moved to (and is learning to surf in) Santa Barbara.*



*brewLAB taplist.*

*Photo Credit: Brian Yaeger*



## HOMEBREWER'S CORNER

# PARTS UNKNOWN

by THIEN LE

Parts Unknown Stout with Pandan... the beer with weird ingredients and a little story to it. I have been homebrewing for a few years and have always tried to infuse some culture into my beers. Some come out amazing, some will make me lose trust in your feedback. There will always be friends that will tell you it's the best beer they've had but will drain pour behind your back. That's just part of homebrewing. Aside from brewing, I like to travel often and explore different foods from different places. It only makes sense why one of the few shows I have a subscription to is *Parts Unknown* with the late Anthony Bourdain. He inspires me to travel and learn about other cultures and enjoy the simple things in life. The guy basically eats strange but delicious food and drinks beer on every episode...my ideal life!

It was the end of last year when a couple buddies and I decided to travel to Thailand and Singapore for a boys trip. Sounds like a sequel to *The Hangover* or something. Anyways, we traveled to almost every region of Thailand on the SeeFood diet. Ate everything in sight because it was so dirt cheap. Towards the end of the trip, I had tasted this delicious coconut cake with a green coloring inside. I learned that it came from an immensely



Late hop additions.  
Photo Credit: Ian McCall



Danny Priddy, Thien Le and Head brewer Ian McCall. Photo Credit: Hope Eckman

aromatic leaf called pandan. The coconut flavor was perceptible but the pandan just gave it a nice supporting nutty/vanilla complexity which got me all excited because I'm thinking of how it could come together in a beer. Specifically a stout since pastry stouts are currently a big trend in the US.

During the exciting 20 hour plane ride back home, I came up with the recipe while everyone was snoring next to me. Luckily, I had a brewer's publication book on malt with me. The format of the book almost put me out as well but it helped me get an idea of how to compile the flavors from the grain bill together with additions from the pandan. When the time came, I went to visit my mother and asked her to source this pandan leaf. Coincidentally, she walked straight to her backyard and chopped me a handful of this mysterious ingredient I was looking for. You know how Asian parents love to grow random plants in their backyard? I'm glad my mother is one of them. I later found out that you can easily get it in supermarkets as well but everything is always better when it comes from your mother. My next step was to approach Scott Windsor from Windsor Homebrew

Supply in Costa Mesa to put my grain bill together and get things moving!

After this beer was finished, I had a sip and felt like it was well balanced, very crushable, and different from most stouts. This is typically a beer you do for fun and not something you enter into competitions but what do I have to lose? I immediately entered it into the biggest homebrew competition which was the National Homebrew Competition (San Diego Regionals). It ended up winning 1st place in its category. Later on, it advanced into NHC finals and won a silver medal out of 398 entries. That was very mind-blowing for me because that was the first time I entered the NHC and walked away with a silver medal. On top of that, it also received 1st place at the OC Fair shortly after. A beer that was created for fun with ingredients from my mother's backyard had accomplished more than I expected.

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My mother got very excited and started watering her plants immediately.

The next part of this story leads to me scaling up the recipe with RIIP Beer Co. I met with the RIIP team one early Monday morning and met the head brewer Ian McCall. The owners and Ian were very welcoming and ecstatic with scaling this beer up and entering it into Great American Beer Festival (GABF) Pro-Am. The only concern from them was sourcing that much pandan for ten barrels of beer. I found it at two Vietnamese markets in OC and wiped out their whole supply. Brew day finally came and I was obviously very thrilled to get my hands dirty and get to work. Ian had showed me how their 10bbl SS BREWTECH brewhouse operated and how it differs from other systems. I'm

very infatuated with technology so I felt like a kid at a candy shop.

During brew day while we were chopping the pandan to prepare for the whirlpool addition, people would walk into the warehouse and tell us what they smelled. Everyone pretty much had a different response, which was great. Ian mentioned that it has an aroma similar to condensed milk. Immediately I suggested that we should do a coffee variant because coffee and condensed milk go together like peanut butter and jelly... well at least for me. That's how to cask with coffee became reality. Even though Ian is very knowledgeable and full of experience, he is a very humble guy and is open minded to ideas regardless of your background. The first coffee that came to mind was Rising Tides



Menu board with coffee cask variant.

Photo Credit: Thien Le

Coffee in Arkansas. The roaster, Ronny, is great at his craft and knows how to pair coffee with beer so I called him to source the perfect bean and start prepping.

My whole experience brewing and scaling up my beer with RIIP was very eye-opening. I expected it to be very complicated but Ian, co-owners Ryan Rasmussen and Ryan Hopkins, and the RIIP team made it a fun and great learning experience for me. It gives me an idea of what it would be like working in a brewery. Regardless if this beer does well at GABF or not,

I feel like a big winner. Having to do something like this is rewarding already. I am very happy and content to even have this opportunity to meet and learn from great people. The biggest take away from this experience is seeing how the RIIP team works so well together to curate the finest beers.

Cheers!

*Thien Le is an award-winning homebrewer in Orange County. And now he is a published author in BEER PAPER! (Editor's Note: I had this beer at Riip and it was fantastic)*



Thien Le and Danny Priddy prepare and process the Pandan.

Photo Credit: Hope Eckman

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## Beachwood Blendery

247 N Long Beach Blvd, Long Beach  
beachwoodbbq.com

## Beachwood BBQ

131 ½ Main St, Seal Beach  
beachwoodbbq.com

## Bluebird Brasserie Brewery & Eatery

13730 Ventura Blvd, Sherman Oaks  
bluebirdbrasserie.com

## Brew Kitchen Ale House

10708 Los Alamitos Blvd, Los Alamitos  
brewkitchenalehouse.com

## Brewyard Beer Company

906 Western Ave, Glendale  
brewyardbeercompany.com

## Chapman Crafted Beer

123 N Cypress St, Old Towne Orange  
chapmancrafted.beer

## Cismontane Brewing Company

1409 E Warner Suite C, Santa Ana  
cismontanebrewing.com

## Claremont Craft Ales

1420 N Claremont Blvd #204c, Claremont  
claremontcraftales.com

## El Segundo Brewing

140 Main St, El Segundo  
elsegundobrewing.com

## Figueroa Mountain Brewing - Westlake Village

30770 Russell Ranch Rd,  
Westlake Village  
FigMtnBrew.com

## Firestone Walker - The Propagator

3205 Washington Blvd, Marina Del Rey  
firestonebeer.com

## HopSaint Brewing Company

5160 W 190th St, Torrance  
hopsaint.com

## Ironfire Brewing Co.

42095 Zevo Dr Suite #1, Temecula  
ironfirebrewing.com

## Karl Strauss Brewing Co.

2390 E Orangewood Ave #100, Anaheim  
karlstrauss.com

## Karl Strauss Brewing Co.

600 Wilshire Blvd #100, Los Angeles  
karlstrauss.com

## Liberation Brewing

3630 Atlantic Ave, Long Beach  
liberationbrewing.com

## MacLeod Brewing

14741 Calvert St, Van Nuys  
macleodale.com

## Mikkeller

330 W Olympic Blvd, Los Angeles  
mikkellerbar.com/la

## Naja's Place

154 International Boardwalk, Redondo Beach  
najasplace.com

## Riley's

5331 E 2nd St, Long Beach  
rileyson2nd.com

## Skyland Ale Works

1869 Pomona Road E & F, Corona  
skylandaleworks.com

## Smog City - Steelcraft

3768 Long Beach Boulevard #110,  
Long Beach  
steelcraftlb.com/smog-city-brewing

## Smog City Brewing

1901 Del Amo Blvd, Torrance  
smogcitybrewing.com

## The Stalking Horse Brewery & Freehouse

10543 Pico Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90064  
thestalkinghorsepub.com

## State Brewing Company

1237 W 134th St, Gardena  
facebook.com/statebrewingco

## Strand Brewing

2201 Dominguez St, Torrance  
strandbrewing.com

## Timeless Pints

3671 Industry Ave C1, Lakewood  
timelesspints.com

## Unsung Brewing Co.

500 S Anaheim Blvd, Anaheim  
unsungbrewing.com

## Verdugo West

156 W Verdugo Ave, Burbank  
verdugowestbrewing.com

## Ximix Craft Exploration

13723 1/2 Harvard Pl, Gardena  
ximixcraft.com

## Zymurgy Brew Works & Tasting Room

22755 Hawthorne Blvd, Torrance  
zymurgybrewworks.com

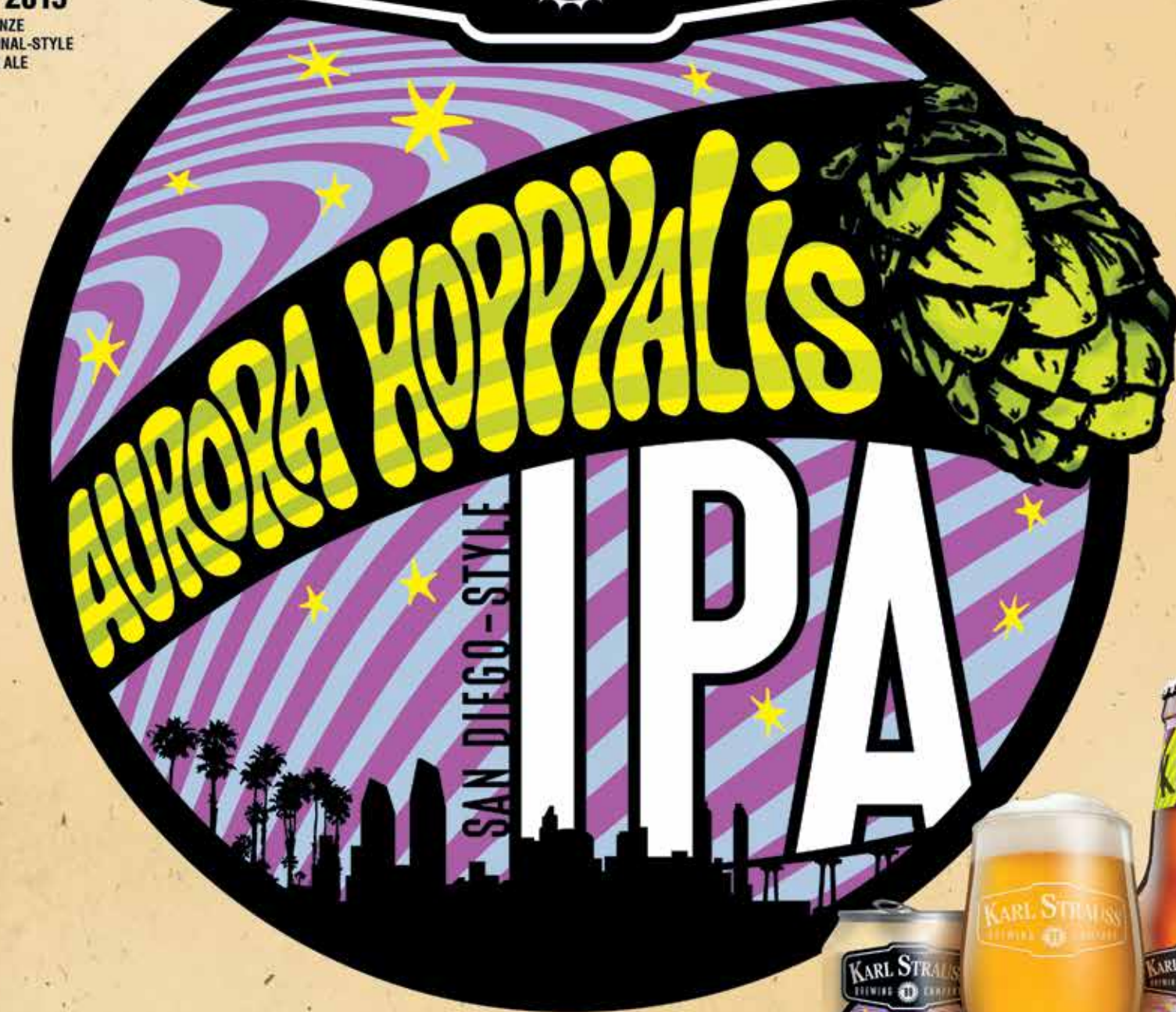


**MID-SIZE BREWING COMPANY OF THE YEAR**

GREAT AMERICAN BEER FESTIVAL - 2016



**GABF 2015**  
BRONZE  
INTERNATIONAL-STYLE  
PALE ALE



A San Diego-style IPA brewed with Simcoe, Mosaic, Amarillo, and Citra hops. Robust flavors and aromas of tropical fruit, pine, and tangerine linger through a dry, crisp finish.



**PROUDLY INDEPENDENT SINCE '89**



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