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Evan Price (Green Cheek) and Matt Brynildson (Firestone Walker)

Photo Credit: Nick Gingold

FAILING UP

By Matt Brynildson

In just two short years, Firestone Walker has teamed up with Green Cheek on three separate collaboration beers. At that rate, it's safe to say that we have a crush on Green Cheek. It all originates from my friendship with Green Cheek co-founder and brewer Evan Price. We have much in common—but we are also a study in contrasts. As a brewer, I tend to be analytical, honing my beers through the elimination of variables. Evan, on the other hand, rolls more freely. In his words, he is dedicated to the idea of “failing up”—rarely doing the same thing twice, and discovering greatness along the way. Yet when he talks about “the never-ending road to perfection,” and about how “the beer is never finished,” it's like he stole the words right out of my mouth.

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OWNER/PUBLISHER/EDITOR: Daniel Drennon
 CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Joshua Cortez
 EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE EDITOR: Renee Imhoff

HEAD WRITER:
 Daniel Drennon

SENIOR CONTRIBUTOR:
 Tomm Carroll

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTORS:
 Simon Brown, Matt Brynildson, Nick Gingold, Trevor Hagstrom,
 Sean Inman, Frances Lopez, Maggie Rosenberg, and Brian Yaeger

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LABW 2019

THE STATE OF LA BEER 2019

by Frances Michelle Lopez

The 11th Annual L.A. Beer Week is here, and we are eager to usher a warmer season to pull us out of an unusually long cold spell during what has possibly been the roughest winter craft beer in L.A. has seen yet. Cold, rainy days aren't kind to local tap rooms and our industry has had to brace itself during the season where we anticipate a holiday lull. As we enter a decade of celebrating craft beer in Los Angeles, it's important to note just how far we've come in terms of having a local brewing scene. The early days of Craftsman, Wolf Creek, and Red Car were the foundations of the original microbrew movement; setting the stage for when the craft boom in 2009 ushered in the likes of Eagle Rock, Ladyface, and Strand. There were less than 20 founding breweries in the Los Angeles County Brewers Guild at its conception in 2013, and as of today, we are the nonprofit home to 92 small and independent craft breweries and counting.

The growth is staggering, but that's not to say it has come without its share of casualties. It's unfortunate that L.A. County saw two closures in the last year when veteran brewpub Kinetic Brewing and newcomers Henson Brewing had to close their doors. It was the first time in years that we had seen a craft brewery dissolve. But as disappointing as it was to lose those two businesses, the overall health of our industry is still thriving which makes the writing of this column just a touch more bittersweet. The rest just really needed to make it out of winter.



LA brewers on Unity Brew Day at Claremont Craft Ales

Photo Credit: Nick Gingold

This is where you come in. As much as we love throwing a giant summer party for you and all our friends, it's important now more than ever to double down on supporting craft all year long. The Big Beer marketing budgets have inflated and their pseudo (or former) craft brands are coming after our local taps at an even stronger velocity. Our state and national trade organizations are fighting to protect the rights and privileges of our small and independent businesses but are up against seven-figure lobbying and campaign contributions. Our community may be growing in numbers, but our voices still aren't loud enough. Making the conscious

effort to support independent craft beer is voting with your wallets; it is investing directly into your communities; helping to create and sustain jobs and boost local economies.

As a brewers guild, one of our main missions is to promote and protect craft beer in L.A. Events such as L.A. Beer Week help us achieve this while also helping to raise funds to keep our organization going. We don't have the luxury of Big Beer's deep pockets. Instead, we pool our limited resources and align ourselves with generous sponsors and partners who believe in our values and the quality of our brewing community. This year, our guild has made it a goal to reach as many people as we can. By increasing the number of smaller hyper-localized events, we can engage and educate beer lovers across L.A. County. The intent is to make L.A. beer a household name so that the 92 small breweries we have and counting have a fighting chance to survive not just another gray winter but the challenges of operating a small business in a climate that seems to continue to reward the Big Guys over the little ones.

Putting all the seriousness aside however, I am proud of the direction our beer community is headed in. We

may still see highs and lows, but our market is maturing – something we couldn't have said about the average beer drinker 10 years ago. The landscape of L.A. beer is incredibly exciting as we see new breweries popping up in areas that didn't have a brewery before. Larger pockets of the county map are being filled with locally owned businesses that want to bring you quality beer *and* a sense of local pride. Innovation, experimentation, and collaboration are alive and well. On top of all that, Los Angeles is in a deeply unique position where diversity and inclusivity are a way of life. This is exemplified by the sheer number of talented women and persons of color who hold critical positions at breweries – from owners to sales and marketing representatives to your favorite bartenders and award-winning brewmasters. This is not a community to take for granted and we wish to amplify and reinforce this in our narrative in everything we do. As we raise a glass to celebrate L.A. Beer Week this month, we implore you to treat every week like L.A. Beer Week by being part of our family and letting us be part of yours.

Frances Michelle Lopez is the Executive Director of the Los Angeles County Brewers Guild.



WISHFUL DRINKING

A BEER WEEK BUT NO BEER SCENE? NO PROBLEM! 10 YEARS AGO, LA CREATED BOTH

by Tomm Carroll

With the 10th anniversary of LA Beer Week upon us, it's only appropriate that we take a look back to see how far Los Angeles has come as a craft beer center over the past decade by revisiting what the LA beer scene, or what passed for it, was like in 2009. (And yes, I know this month brings us LABW11, but it's only been around for 10 years; do the math.)

As I wrote in my "To Live and Drink in LA" column in the June-July issue of *Celebrator Beer News* that year, "What our sprawling megalopolis lacks in microbreweries (they could be counted on the fingers of Jerry Garcia's right hand!), it has more than made up for with a burgeoning scene of bar/restaurants with craft beer taps front and center."

The Breweries

From the above, it's evident that the term "microbrewery" was still used to describe small, independent breweries. And that designation mostly referred to production breweries, as opposed to brewpubs — of which there were quite a few in LA County at the time, mostly holdovers from the "brewpub boom" of late 1980s, '90s and early '00s. Several of those have survived to the present, including Valencia's Wolf Creek — now also a production brewery — and Torrance's Red Car (both of which are Los Angeles County Brewers Guild members), as well as LA's Bonaventure, Long Beach's Rock Bottom, San Pedro's eponymous brewpub, and the longest, continually operating brewpub in LA County,



The first LABW festival at Descanso Gardens in 2009 Photo Credit: Sean Inman

Belmont in Long Beach (est. 1990).

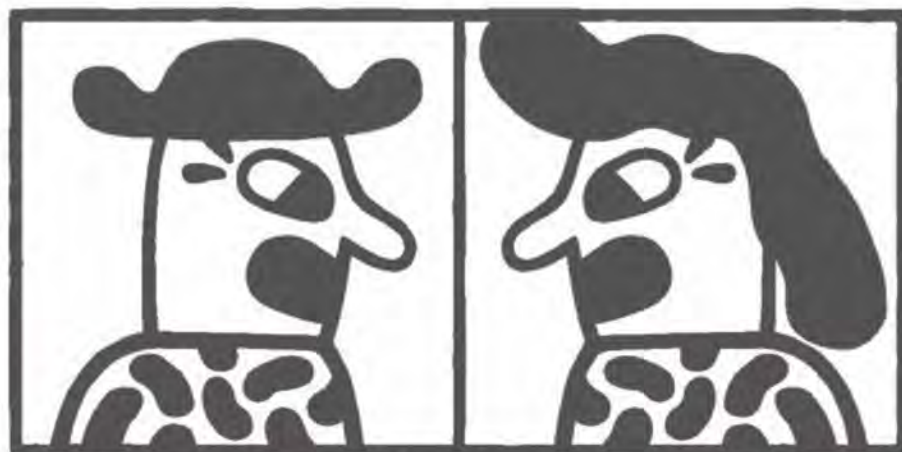
As for the production breweries (micro or otherwise) back in '09, there indeed were a diminishing few. The massive Anheuser-Busch plant in Van Nuys, the only extant macrobrewery in LA (expansion attempts by Pabst and Schlitz had folded decades prior), was still punching out Budweiser and its ilk, and generally dumbing down beer for the masses, as it had been since 1954.

One of the micro survivors was the proto-craft Pasadena beer-maker with the prescient moniker of Craftsman. Fourteen years old in 2009, and still going strong today, it opened small in 1995 — and stayed small on purpose. Arguably the progenitor of LA's craft breweries, Craftsman, through its self-admitted curmudgeon of an owner/brewmaster Mark Jilg, has always produced artisanal brews, favoring substance over style, flavor over hype, and brewing over marketing. And yes,

Craftsman will be pouring its beers at the LABW11 kickoff fest.

Also a part of LA's beerscape a decade ago was another suitably titled microbrewery, Angel City, which is still with us today despite a convoluted backstory. In 1997, award-winning local homebrewer Michael Bowe launched Angel City Brewing out of a small warehouse space on Helms Avenue in Culver City. He brewed at Alpine Village Hofbrau/Southern California Brewing in Torrance, a mostly contract brewery that opened in 1988. Bowe eventually purchased the brewery on eBay in 2004 when the owner put it up for sale, and renamed it.

After a dispute with the Alpine Village complex owners, Bowe moved the brewery to the historic John A. Roebbling Building in DTLA in 2010, prefiguring the Arts District as a



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(WISHFUL DRINKING continued on page 8)



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(WISHFUL DRINKING continued)

“brewing district” by five years. He opened the taproom the next year, but never brewed a drop at the new location. Boston Beer Company’s wholly owned subsidiary Alchemy & Science bought the facility from Bowe in 2012 and re-opened it as a functioning brewery the following year. The new Angel City cleaned up at this year’s LA and San Diego International Beer Competitions — coincidentally, not unlike Bowe’s brewery did 10 years ago. Hopefully, some of this year’s winners will be on tap at the LABW fest.

The only other microbrewery in LA in 2009 was El Monte’s Skyscraper, which opened in 2007. It ceased operations to move to a larger facility in City of Industry in 2012, but never reopened. Owner/brewmaster Phil Sutton produced mostly lagers, such as Power Tool Pilsner and Lug Nut Lager, but the brewery’s best-remembered beer was its contract brew of Requiem Espresso Stout for Gentleman Scholar Brewing (the *nom de bière* of local publican/brewer Martin Svab, currently co-owner of The 4th Horseman in Long Beach).

The Beer Bars

Speaking of Svab, 10 years ago, after serving as a sales rep for Stone Brewing, he was the assistant GM of Naja’s Place in Redondo Beach, and launched the first of the bar’s infamous IPA Festivals that spring (more on LA beer festivals below). Naja’s, of course, is one of LA’s longstanding beer bars, having been originally opened by a French-Lebanese Palestinian named Najah Zeinaty in 1981. The only older good-beer-focused bar/restaurant in LA is the venerable Stuffed Sandwich in San Gabriel, which Sam and Marlene Samaniego, both veterans of beer distribution, opened in 1976 — before brewpubs were even legal! Sam sadly passed away in 2014, but Marlene is still carrying on the now-craft beer legacy, as is Naja’s current owner Jim Trevisyan.

But, as mentioned in that opening quote from the *Celebrator*, LA was already in its beer bar phase by summer 2009. Spurred on by the amazing, unseen-outside-of-San-Diego tap list of Gabriel Gordon’s Beachwood BBQ at the end of 2006 when it opened in Orange County’s Seal Beach (yes, the OC beat LA to the craft beer party), the launch



Martin Svab (left) hanging Scholar banner at first LABW Photo Credit: Sean Inman

of the Verdugo Bar in Glassell Park by publican rock stars-to-be Ryan Sweeney and Brandon Bradford about a year later was a game-changer. And by 2008, things started turning around. That’s when craft-forward beer bars and restaurants really took hold in LA, with the openings of instant beer destinations such as Sang Yoon’s Father’s Office 2 in Culver City, Brian Lenzo’s Blue Palms Brewhouse in Hollywood, and Joseph Pitruzzelli and Tyler Wilson’s Wurstküche sausage

and Belgian/German beer venue in DTLA, among others.

Another wave of craft eateries and drinkeries followed in 2009, including Jason Bernstein and James Starr’s The Golden State in the Fairfax District, Mike and Chris Simms’ Simmzy’s in Manhattan Beach (the first outlet of the local chain, which now includes a Burbank brewpub), and Clay Harding’s 38° Ale House and Grill in Alhambra (formerly the California Brewing Co.

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The first LABW festival at Descanso Gardens in 2009 Photo Credit: Sean Inman

brewpub). All are still going strong. And, of course, this is the year the legendary Blue Palms anniversary parties began, with proprietor Lenzo pulling out all the stops — as well as rare kegs and bottles — to celebrate.

The Beer Fests

Returning to my *Celebrator* column, this time from the October-November 2009 issue, I wrote, "...Southern California beer fans...are well aware that in 2009 Los Angeles beer culture has really come into its own. One example of that fact is the virtual explosion of beer festivals on the local scene this year. And now comes what promises to be the crowning event: LA Beer Week."

Yes, the inaugural LABW was in mid-October, capping off a year of earlier fests in the county, which were basically testing the waters of such gatherings to see if there was enough interest for a larger, longer celebration of suds.

Festival entrepreneur-to-be Dan Silverstein and his Drink:Eat:Play production company was first out of the gate in April, claiming the name Los Angeles Beer Festival for a two-day, four-hour fest with more than 60 mostly macro- and some microbreweries on the lot of Sony Studios in Culver City. It sold out both days to some 3,300 attendees overall, proving that LA could indeed support a beer festival. Realizing he was onto something, Silverstein quickly scheduled an OC Beer Fest in August and a "Septemberfest" at Paramount Studios in Hollywood that year. But they were more about the quantity of beer rather than the quality, and quickly gained a reputation as

drunkfests.

Next came the much smaller but more promising Craft Beer Fest LA in May at the Echoplex in Echo Park, drawing some 850 folks and featuring nearly 30 craft beer choices (Craftsman being the only hometown brewery). Organized by the short-lived LA CABAL (Los Angeles Craft and Artisanal Beer Appreciation League), a group of local beer fans in the service industry, it was unfortunately a one-time event.

July brought the Brew Haw Haw Fest to the Autry National Center in Griffith Park. A benefit for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation with a beer-themed silent auction, this second annual fest raised over \$40,000 from nearly 400 attendees, and poured a mix of micro and macro beers (Angel City was the lone LA brewery).

By that summer, the beer brain trust of Sweeney and Bradford of Verdugo fame (Surly Goat had not opened yet), along with Dennis Hartman and Jay Baum, who worked in beer distribution (and were behind Pasadena's pioneering Crown City brewpub) were already planning the *pièce de résistance* of local beer festivals. And, with some support by others involved in local beer — bar, brewery and restaurant owners and employees, as well as homebrewers, beer scribes (including this writer) and early bloggers — the 11-day Los Angeles Beer Week 1 launched October 15 and featured over 60 events throughout the Southland.

The night-before kickoff party was hosted by Naja's, and featured the beers and special guests (including the then-ubiquitous Greg Koch) from San Diego's Stone Brewing

(remember, there were only three small LA breweries at the time), and the opening weekend was anchored by an Oktoberfest celebration in the beer garden (parking lot) of Verdugo. Instead of the kickoff signature LABW festival that exists now, it was more of a wrap party/beer fest on the closing weekend, held at Descanso Gardens in La Cañada Flintridge, benefiting the non-profit Spero Foundation. Some 600 beer fans attended.

Throughout the 11 days, activities ranged from tap takeovers at Whittier's The Bottle Room to new beer debuts from Firestone Walker and Nectar Ales, from beer-and-food pairings to homebrewing demonstrations, and from a local brewery cask night at Beachwood BBQ to a Chimay meet-the-brewer gathering at Lucky Baldwins in Pasadena.

The first LA Beer Week was a celebration of good (and particularly craft) beer in Los Angeles, even if the vast majority of it wasn't brewed in the county. We are probably the only major city to have launched a Beer Week without having had a real brewing scene. The irony is, less than a month later, there were

three brand-new craft breweries that opened: production breweries Strand in Torrance and Eagle Rock in Glassell Park, and brewpub Ladyface Ale Companie in Agoura Hills. Together, they represented the new wave of brewing in LA, and paved the way for so many to follow suit.

Fast-forward back to the present: Ten years later, those three LA breweries have increased some 30-fold and, with their fellow members of the Los Angeles County Brewers Guild (which produces LABW now), will be pouring at the LABW11 kickoff fest June 15. Stop by their booths and, while drinking their beer, thank them for kickstarting LA's modern craft brewery scene and wish them an early happy 10th anniversary.

Award-winning beer writer Tomm Carroll, a longtime contributor to *Celebrator Beer News*, was shortlisted for a *British Guild of Beer Writers Award* in 2018. Even though he was part of the organizing team for the original LABW in 2009, he ironically missed the entire event as he was on a previously scheduled European beer trip. Contact him at beerscribe@earthlink.net.

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UNITY BREW DAY

UNITY HEADS EAST TO CLAREMONT

by Sean Inman



LA brewers at Claremont Craft Ales

Photo Credit: Nick Gingold

Unity, the beer concept, started with Eagle Rock Brewery and nestled there for the formative years of LA Beer Week. As the beer and the week-long event have grown, the host brewery has slowly increased its footprint around the city. And this year made a big geographic leap, awarding the brewing and canning duties to Claremont Craft Ales.

For the “unofficial” start of the 11th LA Beer Week, representatives from LA County Brewers Guild member breweries trickled into the Claremont brewhouse and taproom on May 14th on the ceremonial brew day to talk shop, gather LA Beer Week coasters and postcards and do a little pouring of hops into the kettle or cleaning out of the grain before gathering for a group photo. Then the baton, in the form of a neon Unity sign, was passed from LA Ale Works Kip Barnes and Andrew Fowler over to Simon Brown, Brian Seffer and their brewing team at Claremont.

The process to select a brewery to host Unity for the year starts with guild breweries bidding for the right in a manner much more democratic than how Los Angeles ended up with the

2028 Olympics. The winning brewery has to be able to produce enough of the beer and be able to package half of it for distribution. They also have to follow some branding and design guidelines as well. From there, the style of beer is open with an emphasis on creating a beer that Los Angeles independent beer fans can rally behind.

Unity has evolved from the early days of experimental beers such as a Red Mild with honey and hibiscus that Eagle Rock Brewery collaborated with Craftsman on or a Prickly Pear Berliner Weiss that required lots of manual labor with dangerous spikes to the Unity for the 7th LA Beer Week, a tart Saison from Smog City. All of which were also bottle only.

Of late, IPA and 16oz cans have been the style of choice with both El Segundo and Three Weavers providing their versions of Unity via hop bitterness. Last year, there were two Unity IPA's, one hazy and one West Coast. Frances Lopez the director of the LA County Brewers Guild believes that this is a move from the “esoteric and weird” to keeping the consumer in the forefront of the beer decision. According to Lopez, it also serves to

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Cory Edwards, brewer at Claremont Craft Ales Photo Credit: Nick Gingold

“showcase consistent and high quality” standards that brewers in Los Angeles have reached.

This year Unity will be a what Brown calls “a very simple beer”. That tracks with the recipe for the West Coast IPA which uses one malt only (Pilsen) for what Brown describes in superlatives, “Super pale. Super dry. Super aromatic. Super bitter.” The beer is loaded with the largest amount of dry hopping that Claremont has ever done with a mixture of Citra, Mosaic and Simcoe and partially using Cryo versions of that trio of hops.

Claremont has shown a facility for IPA’s with Baseline IPA as a traditional favorite along with a version with peaches and pink peppercorns named simply as Pepper & Peaches, a coffee version Coffee Del as well as pushes into hazy styles such as the recently released and quickly sold out Laugh It Up Fuzzball.

The choice of Claremont Craft Ales to host and can Unity this year will

put a much-needed spotlight onto the Eastern edge of our brewing community and draw them closer to those in the middle of the Los Angeles beer map. It also shows, as Lopez noted, that Unity is “not guided by mileage.” Many members of the Eastern wing of brewers were in attendance like Alost Brewing and the recently opened High Point Brew Co. of San Dimas.

The choice also opens up the possibility that an Antelope Valley brewery can take up the mantle, or Glendale or DTLA for that matter and doesn’t have to be just a westside operation and finally, it makes the name Unity feel more unifying.

Unity 2019 will be on draft throughout LA Beer Week and will have its own featured booth at the annual Kick-Off Festival.

Sean Inman has been writing about craft beer in Los Angeles since 2009. His daily beer posts are on the Beer Search Party blog. He also writes a bi-weekly beer column for Food GPS.

LA Beer Week 2019



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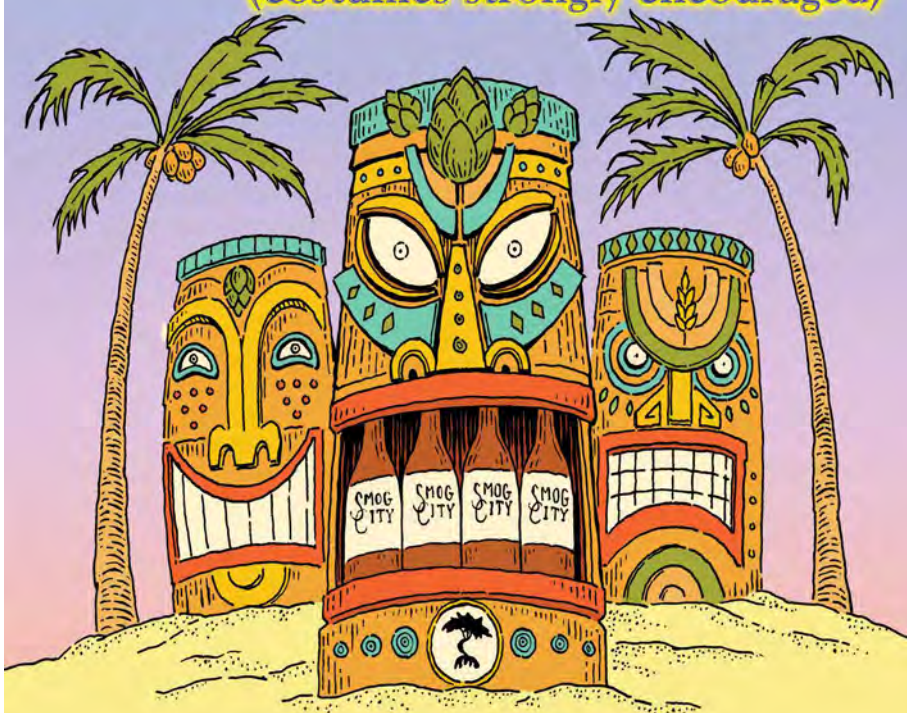
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COVER STORY

FAILING UP

THE CLIMB OF EVAN PRICE AS A WORLD CLASS BREWER

by Matt Brynildson



Evan Price, co-owner and Bad Ass Brewer at Green Cheek

All photos by Nick Gingold

In just two short years, Firestone Walker has teamed up with Green Cheek on three separate collaboration beers. At that rate, it's safe to say that we have a crush on Green Cheek. It all originates from my friendship with Green Cheek co-founder and brewer Evan Price. We have much in common—but we are also a study in contrasts. As a brewer, I tend to be analytical, honing my beers through the elimination of variables. Evan, on the other hand, rolls more freely. In his words, he is dedicated to the idea of “failing up”—rarely doing the same thing twice, and discovering greatness along the way. Yet when he talks about “the never-ending road to perfection,” and about how “the beer is never finished,” it's like he stole the words right out of my mouth. Throughout our collaborations, I've learned a lot about Evan's journey—but now it's time to fill in the blanks and find out exactly where Evan came from, how he got here, and what makes him tick. Thanks to Daniel Drennon and *Beer Paper* for inspiring this exchange. I'm stoked—and hope you are, too—to learn more about this amazing brewer:

MB: I want to touch on things that tell the story of you as a Southern California brewer and what interests you as a brewer as you develop your craft—but also get a little into the Evan Price I know and love as a friend – the music lover who I got to hang out with a little at Coachella, the food lover that I've been able to sit at the table with as well as share cocktail curiosities with, and the father who managed, together with your amazing wife Aubrey, to have twin boys while birthing a brewery with your partner Brian... plenty of good stuff to cover. On that note, I would like to cover for our readers a synopsis of your personal history. Where were you born and raised?

EP: I was born in Escondido, CA. and lived in a mobile home surrounded by six acres of orange groves and strawberry fields. We lived right next door to my grandpa who had just about every type of fruit tree that will grow in those parts. I used to walk around with him, or on my own, and try all of these different fruits as they became ripe. I discovered early on that I loved eating and that tasting new things was always exciting to me. I always

loved to cook early on, and learned from my mom and the rest of my family, that taking the time to make something from scratch could prove to be better than something pre-made or store bought. My mom used to make wedding cakes, she's a fantastic baker, and we would cook together a lot, and we still do.

When I was seven my mom remarried and we moved up to Orange County. I still remember my first moment of truly understanding how delicious something could be was when I was served a turd. After talking up how delicious it was, my stepdad served me up a cup of store-bought, pasteurized orange juice, Donald Duck to be exact (and the turd in question), and I still remember looking up to him and saying “this isn't orange juice!” I had been drinking fresh-squeezed orange juice since I was born and even at the age of seven, I believed it was worth the extra work to juice it yourself. It tasted that much better! In 3rd grade I was convinced I was going to be the chef of a cruise boat, buy a big house (with a back house for my mom) and then ALLOW my stepdad to be the gardener.

MB: Where did you go to school and what brought you into beer?

EP: I'm only a high school grad from Savanna High School in Anaheim. When I was 18, I couldn't have been more excited to move out of my parents' house, I was ready!

After high school, I spent a long time meandering through different classes at a few different junior colleges, but could never quite figure out what I wanted to do. During that time, I did my first trip to the UK and Europe with a couple of pals, and it ended up turning into a fantastic beer discovery trip. We were 21. At that time, I fell in love with the cask ales of England, the dry stouts in Ireland, the Hefeweizen of Germany and even had my first Duvel in Belgium.

I started homebrewing soon after and wanted to make the beers that mesmerized me during that trip. The first batch of beer I ever homebrewed was with my pal Joe and I believe it was an English bitter. We were so pumped up that we successfully made alcohol, life couldn't have been better!

In my early twenties, I was working a kushy job at the House of Blues in Anaheim. It's not like I loved the job, but I was comfortable, and it was great money with pretty short hours. The butterfly effect of me getting into brewing all comes down to this angry guy that I was serving one day. I started laughing during his ridiculous rant about his bad day at Disneyland and when he asked me what was so funny, I just smiled and said, "You're just kinda being a dick." I got fired that day, and the reason why I bring this up, is because I'm not sure if I ever would have left! To then get a job at BJ's serving tables, to then squeeze myself into the brewery there, and to get to make beer for a living? Insane!

Starting at BJ's, I never thought I'd make a career out of brewing since I was only interested in learning how to make my homebrews better. That was over 13 years ago now. I was dating my now wife, and we both felt that it was important to follow our passions.

MB: *We can weave this into the rest of the story as we go but I want to be sure I have the basics. We can leave out the story of how you met your wife (smiling).*



Bob Kunz, Evan Partridge, Valerie Hicks, Evan Price, Matt Brynildson, and Sam Tierney

Photo Credit: Nick Gingold

EP: What?!? No kangaroo pouch belt buckle?!?!?

MB: *Er...No. Moving on, I know you then moved onto Hangar 24, which was more of a production brewery. I'm guessing those experiences*

taught you a lot and showed you some different examples of how breweries can be run.

EP: During that two-year span at BJ's, I worked under a good number of talented brewers who each put a

different importance on each part of the brewing process. I ended up realizing that every aspect of the brewing process mattered, and I feel fortunate to have learned that lesson so young into my career.

(FAILING UP continued on page 14)

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Evan Price and Matt Brynildson

(FAILING UP continued)

At Hangar 24, I worked directly under the owner, Ben, brewing everything as their first brewer. I was given the opportunity to come up with my first commercial recipe, Columbus IPA. Ben had the San Diego LEGEND Lee Chase, former Head Brewer for Stone, come in as a consultant and he taught me a lot of great process techniques that absolutely changed the way I run a brewery. Working at H24 was such a different vibe than BJ's. The brewery was getting a lot of traction and the locals really wanted to support what it was. The people of Redlands were filling up the spot nearly every night to drink Orange Wheat. It was the first time I had that much responsibility and expectations to perform and meet deadlines. I learned a lot about myself during that time. What I wanted and what I didn't want. I learned a lot of technical brewing stuff that has been irreplaceable, but it ended up just pushing me more to work for a smaller place.

MB: I'm guessing those experiences taught you a lot and showed you some

different examples of how breweries can be run. Was your move to TAPS an indication that you were most interested in pub brewing? Were you looking for a more creative outlet, simply working on your brewing chops or gleaning ideas for the ultimate plan of opening up your own brewery?

EP: Going to work for Victor Novak at TAPS was a polar opposite change from H24. It wasn't about making a lot of beer, it was just about making the best beer. Victor really believed that too. He was so much more sensory driven with his beers and so much more prone to make changes with established recipes. Is this batch delicious? We would talk about each batch that was finished and decide what we thought we should change about it. We were a good team.

MB: I know that early on I figured out that the pub brewing thing wasn't for me and I focused on scaling things up, building a quality control program and running a larger team of brewers. Did you find that working with smaller teams allowed you some



Matt, Evan and Propagator Brewer Sam Tierney

All photos by Nick Gingold

kind of creative freedom? Or was that just the way the cards fell?

EP: Yeah! I fell in love with the flexibility and creative freedom with pub brewing, and also the idea of just keeping a brewery small. With keeping things small, you are afforded the luxury of (mostly) selling direct to consumer, getting the freshest beer into people's hands and are able to spend ridiculous amounts of money on ingredients in order to make the beer more impactful.

MB: Obviously your time at TAPS with Victor and Kyle Manns had a positive impact on your brewing style and gave you some additional tools for what it takes to build balanced and drinkable beer. It also was a time when the TAPS Brand was red hot, you brewed a lot of tasty suds and won a lot of awards in those years (back to back WBC Champion Brewery Awards.) What was going on behind the scenes that was resulting in such amazing beer? From the outside it appeared that there was some real magic behind those walls.

EP: Victor had been a pub brewer for a long time and had had a lot of his beers and recipes already dialed-in and was making fantastic beer, which is exactly why I wanted to work with him. I brought to the table process techniques that I had learned from BJ's, H24 and some of the MBAA text books, that helped make the beers more stable. The real magic came down to us working well as a team. We made the beers we liked and drank. No frills.

MB: Then you moved to Noble Ale Works and were at the helm with full creative control and a lot of

experience to draw from. Tell me a little about moving into that position, putting the brewery on track, building a team and creating the beers there.

EP: It was extremely humbling going from an award-winning brewery like TAPS to then running my own beer program at Noble. I was determined to learn and understand how to create delicious beers on my own, so I started from scratch without taking any of the TAPS recipes with me. It's funny how much ego you can get working under someone else, thinking that the success is all you, but to then go and do your own thing... I just felt like I fell on my face. Ha ha! I was reading as many brewing textbooks that I could and talking to as many brewers that I could. Julian from Beachwood was a huge help early on at Noble. One of my favorite lines he told me, when I was asking him about how he gets so much aroma in his IPAs, was, "You want more hop character? Use more hops!" I always learn the hard way.

MB: Well, you managed to win WBC Champion Brewery at Noble as well... and then there is Green Cheek. I know the story pretty well but maybe you can tell us the story of how you and Brian decided to team up and open an independent brewery?

EP: Brian was the ying to my yang! Without Brian, Green Cheek would have never gotten off the ground! He brings years of business sense to our duo. He's the one that put together our business plan and figured out how we were going to borrow enough money to open this thing up. I would have just talked about the idea of opening a brewery for years, like so many of us do with our long-term goals. After

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working for a company with a lot of shareholders unnecessarily involved, we knew we wanted to own and run the business ourselves, and that's what we've done.

MB: Also, after having worked in a number of widely different breweries in Southern California, how do you want to define your brewery and the beers?

EP: I mostly view what we are as a moving target. We are always changing. We evolve with the times, because I believe it's important to make beers that people are excited about and want to drink, since I'm not the only one drinking them. As a brewer, to only make the beers that you personally like to drink comes from a place of privilege that I'm just not offered. With that said, I love to do a mix of the newest, weirdest, most out-there beers, right alongside the most classic beer styles possible.

MB: Will IPA inevitably be the main focus or will you continue to push for a diverse portfolio? I have to say that I've been stoked with the wide range of beers, and especially happy to see you pushing lagers out there including the oak-aged lager program you have established. Is the plan not

to develop a flagship but instead focus on creativity and diversity?

EP: Yeah, the focus has been a constant evolving tap list without too many repeating beers coming in. We rotate through different west coast IPAs, hazy IPAs, etcetera, because it's what people like to drink. I honestly don't drink a whole lot of IPA, even though I feel like I make that style better than anything else.

MB: What is the plan for growth and outside sales? Will this be a direct to consumer project or will wider distribution inevitably be needed?

EP: I don't know. Slow organic growth has been the plan. We want to pay back our SBA loan without getting into too much debt. Our main goal is to keep ourselves as a small, neighborhood brewery, but who knows!

MB: Let's talk about flavor and try to get a little insight into what inspires you outside of beer and how it makes its way into your professional life.

EP: I like things that taste good. Outside of my wife and kids, it's the thing I think about most and it never stops. The moment I'm done eating lunch, I'm thinking about what I'm gonna cook for dinner. Once I figure

out what I'm gonna cook for dinner, I start thinking about what I'm gonna drink with dinner, or after. In the morning it's all about coffee and tea. Some of my favorites include: Charcoal grilling a rib eye with a bottle of Gueze for dinner. Sweet vermouth on the rocks with a twist for an after dinner drink with my wife.

MB: I know you are a music lover and we share some favorite bands. I see that creep into your beer names. How does music influence beer in your world? Also, I've been able to spend time with you and your wife Aubrey at the dinner table and in a cocktail bar or two. You obviously take the time to explore flavors outside of beer. Can you explain a little how you work those inspirations into your beers?

EP: Music is a huge influence on the beer names for Green Cheek with Wilco references taking the lead. I believe we have more than 12 different Wilco beer names, with two of those being beers that you and I made together; Impossible Germany and Short On Long Term Goals. I'm in love with discovering new music, and I believe it helps get those creative juices flowing.

For the food and drink stuff, tasting new things, or revisiting good ones, is always exciting and ends up inspiring the beer program. From having spumoni, to drinking a cappuccino and eating baklava, all of these things have inspired beers we've made just by experiencing them in everyday life.

MB: Last question – I realized a long time ago that you are a talented fermentation alchemist, but how in the world did you and Aubrey manage to have twin boys on the eve of opening a brewery?! I realize that Brian is an exceptional business partner and all...but I can only guess that it was added inspiration. I must say it definitely adds layers to your superhuman persona. I had my kids after I had established the brewery. How did you do it?

EP: Fuck man. Looking back, I don't know how we did it! It's been a crazy two and half years. It's hard with kids. You constantly are trying to figure out how to create a balance between home life and this crazy work life. But here we are, and it's awesome!

Matt Brynildson, aka "Merlin," is the long-time, award winning brewmaster at Firestone Walker Brewing Company.



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BREWER'S CORNER

BREWING WITH NATIVE PLANTS

by Simon Brown



Simon Brown and Brian Seffer of Claremont Craft Ales
Photo Credit: Bernie Wire (courtesy of LA Brewers Guild)

As any craft beer fan will tell you, today's breweries are really pushing the envelope in terms of ingredients used in beer: sure, all types of fruit imaginable, but also marshmallows, breakfast cereal, and even meat products like bacon and crab. I support this creativity and out-of-the-box thinking. Small breweries are nimble enough to try crazy stuff that regional breweries wouldn't touch with a ten-foot pole. If something doesn't work, you simply move on to the next release. And since the current beer consumer loves whatever is "new", selling these experiments through brewery taprooms is a breeze.

While I have no personal interest in putting breakfast cereals and meat products in my beer, one ingredient category has recently intrigued me, and led to some incredibly interesting brews: native California plants. Consumers still value "local" when choosing their beer, and what's more local than brewing with ingredients that are grown in your own back yard? Using native plant species local to your region shows off incredibly unique flavor profiles while celebrating the flora that makes your home, well, home.

California Sagebrush, Coyote Mint, Pinyon Pine, Woolly Bluecurls, Juniper Berries, Hairy Yerba Santa, and the list goes on and on. There are so many fragrant plants growing all around you that pair really well with craft beer flavors. For example, the beers we have tried include a West Coast IPA with juniper and sage and a black lager with pinyon pine. Both work remarkably well. The citrus notes in the IPA combine with the juniper to invoke flavors of a gin and tonic, while the slight smokiness of the black lager combines with the deep piney notes of the pinyon to taste like a hike through the forest. And this is just the start.

Two obvious questions arise for the brewer interested in experimenting with native plants: What's the best method for utilizing those ingredients? And, is it safe and legal? Let's take these one at a time.

There are three primary ways for infusing herbs into beer: adding them to the boil, adding them post fermentation (like dry hopping), or creating a tincture and adding that to the beer. Our experience has shown that option three is by far the best method to get the most flavor out

of the herbs and to allow maximum control over the infusion of that flavor into the beer, but let's look at each method.

Adding the herbs to the boil works for sure, but the resultant flavor will be more subtle, less bright, and you'll end up requiring a larger supply of the herb, which will affect your yield due to all that extra plant matter in your boil kettle. I would certainly use a mesh bag to contain the herbs to help with yield and clogging issues. And of course, the effectiveness of the boil method is dependent on which herbs you are using. Heartier herbs will work well in the boil, while super delicate plants will quickly break down and boil off, leaving you with minimal flavor contribution.

"Dry hopping" with the herbs also works, and you'll likely end up with a nice bright flavor from the ingredient,

but the required contact time may be inconveniently lengthy and sanitation becomes a concern. Many native plants are firm and woody, and so it could take a long time for the beer to break down those cell structures and access the flavor compounds you are looking for. Hops are soft (and oftentimes pulverized into pellet form), so they infuse very quickly into the beer. Our standard dry hopping schedule requires only 2-3 days of contact time before we can start chilling and clarifying the beer. Herbs on the other hand, may require many weeks of contact time to reach the flavor levels you're shooting for. And in a commercial brewery setting, that tank time is not financially prudent.

I also would be wary of adding herbs at this time due to sanitation concerns. How would you sanitize the herb before adding it to the beer? Hops are naturally antiseptic and professionally

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Juniper

packaged specifically for brewing, so this isn't a concern, but herbs grown in your backyard are covered with wild yeasts and bacteria. I can't think of a practical method for "cleaning" the herbs prior to dropping them into your precious beer.

So that leaves us with tincturing. A "tincture" is an extraction of the essence of the herb using a neutral alcohol like vodka or Everclear. Essentially, you soak the herbs in the alcohol for a couple of weeks, then strain off the solid material. What you're left with is a homemade herb extract that you can precisely add to your beer to dial in exactly the flavor level you want, and with no concerns of affecting yield or risking infection.

Once you have your tincture, grab yourself a pint of your beer and a pipette or eye dropper. Add one milliliter of the tincture to the beer at a time and adjust until it tastes right. Then it's a simple scaling process to determine the amount you'll need to add to your keg or brite tank. Keep in mind that measurement errors are going to be greater when dealing with small volumes (e.g. 1 ml in 16 fl oz) than large ones (125 ml in a 1/2 bbl keg), so use your bench testing as just an approximation of the appropriate dosing for the larger volume. Begin by adding 75% of the scaled up volume to the keg or brite tank, and then adjust from there.

For the commercial brewer, the obvious next question concerns the legality of adding tinctures to beer. Can you add alcohol to your beer? And can you sell beer that has herbs and other plants added to it? The answer is a qualified yes in both cases.

Regarding the addition of alcohol to beer, the TTB states: "In the case of beer with an alcohol content of more than 6% by volume, no more than 1.5% of the volume of the beer may consist of alcohol derived from added flavors and other nonbeverage ingredients containing alcohol."

[Google "27 CFR 25.15"] In our experience, tincture dosing rates are typically a few fluid ounces per half barrel keg. Let's assume we add 2 fl. oz. of tincture to a keg of 6.0% ABV pale ale, and for simplicity, we'll assume the tincture is 100% alcohol. Some quick math will tell you that the new beer has an ABV of only 6.1%, well within the extra 1.5 points allowed by the TTB regulations. And if the final beer is below 6% ABV, up to 49% of that alcohol can come from added flavorings.

But what about the ingredients themselves? This is where you'll need to do a little research of your own to determine the acceptability of a specific ingredient. Some good starting points are (a) the list of TTB approved ingredients that are exempt from formula approvals [Google "TTB Ruling 2015-1"], and (b) the FDA's list of ingredients that are "generally considered safe" [Google "21 CFR 182"]. Please do your own research before producing and selling a beer made with native California plants. Just because I've mentioned a specific ingredient in this article does not mean that you can legally use it. Do your own due diligence!



Coyote Mint

I'll end with a bit of plug. I was first turned on to brewing with native plants through the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in our hometown of Claremont. RSABG is the largest garden dedicated to the preservation of native Californian plant species in the country. They have been a strong partner and supporter of Claremont Craft Ales since we opened 7 years ago, and I encourage anyone interested in beers that use these types of ingredients to pay them a visit on July 6th for their "Brew Wild Festival" (see their ad below).

Cheers and happy brewing!

Simon Brown is the co-owner of Claremont Craft Ales.

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6thlabrea.com

Absolution Brewing

2878 Columbia St, Torrance
absolutionbrewingcompany.com

Angry Horse Brewing

603 W Whittier Blvd, Montebello
angryhorsebrewing.com

Barbara's at the Brewery

620 Moulton Ave #110, Los Angeles
barbarasatthebrewery.com

Beachwood Brewing

7631 Woodwind Dr, Huntington Beach
beachwoodbbq.com

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210 E 3rd St, Long Beach
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247 N Long Beach Blvd, Long Beach
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Beachwood BBQ

131 ½ Main St, Seal Beach
beachwoodbbq.com

Bluebird Brasserie Brewery & Eatery

13730 Ventura Blvd, Sherman Oaks
bluebirdbrasserie.com

Bottlecraft

4150 McGowen St, Long Beach
<https://www.bottlecraftbeer.com/pages/bottlecraft-long-beach>

Bravery Brewing Company

42705 8th St W, Lancaster
braverybrewing.com

Brew Kitchen Ale House

10708 Los Alamitos Blvd, Los Alamitos
brewkitchenalehouse.com

Brewheim

1931 E Wright Cir, Anaheim
brewheim.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

Common Space Brewing

3411 W El Segundo Blvd, Hawthorne
commonspace.la

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Firestone Walker - The Propagator

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firestonebeer.com

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HopSaint Brewing Company

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hopsaint.com

Ironfire Brewing Co.

42095 Zevo Dr Suite #1, Temecula
ironfirebrewing.com

MacLeod Ale Brewing Co.

14741 Calvert St, Van Nuys
macleodale.com

Mikkeller

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

Mt. Lowe Brewing Co

150 E St Joseph St, Arcadia
mtlowebrewing.com

Naja's Place

154 International Boardwalk, Redondo Beach
najasplace.com

Provisions Deli & Bottle Shop

143 N Glassell St, Orange
provisionsmarkets.com

Riip Beer Co

17214 Pacific Coast Hwy, Huntington Beach
riipbeer.com

Riley's On 2nd

5331 E 2nd St, Long Beach
rileyson2nd.com

Santa Ana River Brewing Company

3480 W Warner Ave unit B, Santa Ana
www.santaanariverbrewing

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

Strand Brewing

2201 Dominguez St, Torrance
strandbrewing.com

Ten Mile Brewing

1136 E Willow St, Signal Hill
tenmilebrewing.com

Timeless Pints

3671 Industry Ave C1, Lakewood
timelesspints.com

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SISTER BREWERIES AND BONAVENTURE PREDATE LABW. BY A LOT.

by Brian Yaeger

Anchor Brewing? Check. Anderson Valley Brewing? Still here. Anheuser-Busch? *Grumble-grumble...* the lights are still on. Bayhawk Ales? You may know it as Evans Brewing today, but still, yes. Belmont Brewing? Maybe you've never heard of it or maybe you've only driven past it en route to Beachwood, but check! Instead of continuing to rattle off really old brewery names in alphabetic order, here's the reason for this checklist.

I have a moth-eaten T-shirt from the Second Annual Pacific Coast Beer Fest that took place in 1995 and on the back it features all 72 brewing companies that participated. The first three date back to 1896 (though Anchor was reborn in 1965), 1987, and 1852, respectively. Bayhawk, nee Orange County Brewing, dates back to 1994 as the OC's oldest brewery. But if you look just over the county line, you'll find tiny Belmont Brewing Company

in Long Beach, which survives as Los Angeles County's oldest craft brewing, established in 1990. Additionally, when Belmont's owners plunked a sister brewery atop the Bonaventure Hotel (now the Westin Bonaventure, which has no ownership stake in the tenant brewery) in 1996, it wasn't the only brewery in the city of LA, but it survives as the oldest. For Belmont that's 19 years (and for Bonaventure that's 13 years) before the launch of LA Beer Week.

One more item that's remarkable to note is that Blackwell, the brewer who has neither a car nor a first name that's ever mentioned, has been at the helm of these BBCs since April 1st, 1999. No fooling.

What's more, Blackwell insists his beers at both breweries—where it's all about core brands and a couple seasonals like it was back in the

nineties—"taste like 1999. I don't change stuff." He referenced the New Coke debacle, when diehard fans grew irate at a recipe tweak, and said that his customers want his beers "to taste exactly the same as the last time they were (at the pub)." To crystalize his point, he points out that the top-seller is Marathon blonde ale and that none of Belmont's five permanent taps or Bonaventure's four is an IPA. ("IPA wasn't a big deal in 1999." He's absolutely right.) Furthermore, the lineup features a 4.8% pale and one peculiar fellow described as an amber ale.

Happy hour prices are under \$5 a pint.

FYI, LA's second oldest operating brewery, Eagle Rock, opened in 2009. Perhaps you recall another brewery that opened concurrently in downtown LA called Nibble Bit Tabby, but other than the errant doughnut shop

or cocktail lounge, LA doesn't do nostalgia.

Only 25 breweries listed on the aforementioned shirt survive. Most of the shuttered ones I've never even heard of, or at least I don't recall trying them at the all-you-can-drink beer festival nearly 25 years ago. That's because in 1995 there were all of 858 breweries in the US, according to the Brewers Association. Five years later, that count nearly doubled to 1,566. But another five years onward, it was down to 1,447 and virtually every single brewery that had opened in Los Angeles proved short-lived.

Even Wolfgang Puck, LA's celebrity chef before we had the Food Network to pump out celebrity chefs as commonplace as hazy IPAs, had once opened a brewpub in LA called Eureka. It occupied a huge space in West LA and seating was by

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The perfect beer for summer, Red, Wheat and Blue Double India Pale Ale. Brewed with real blueberries giving a slightly tart fruitiness, we complement the berries with Citra, El Dorado and Simcoe hops. Expect a medley of citrus, tropical fruit and stone fruits. Enjoy while you can, summer won't last for long!

Proudly brewed & bottled by Bravery Brewing Company, LLC, Lancaster, CA
www.braverybrewing.com

16 FL. OZ. (473 ML)

65 IBU'S

7.5% ALC/VOL

CA CRV

GOVERNMENT WARNING: (1) ACCORDING TO THE SURGEON GENERAL, WOMEN SHOULD NOT DRINK ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES DURING PREGNANCY BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF BIRTH DEFECTS. (2) CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES IMPAIRS YOUR ABILITY TO DRIVE A CAR OR OPERATE MACHINERY, AND MAY CAUSE HEALTH PROBLEMS.



Blackwell the Brewer at Belmont Brewing Company

Photo Credit: Daniel Drennon

reservation only; it was near impossible to get a reservation. (No OpenTable, for starters.) LA has always loved all things trendy. But craft beer has always been a tough sell in this town that's more Kardashian than Papazian. It really wasn't until this decade that LA has accepted craft beer is a culture, not couture. And Eureka, like Belmont, opened in 1990. But unlike Belmont, it failed a couple years later and its brewing system found its way to Bell's in Michigan to become their pilot brewery. Blackwell's still brewing on the same seven-barrel system in the same small brewhouse. The seven brite tanks cramp the space even more, but hey, it's got a great view of the beach, the ocean and the Queen Mary.

The location isn't the sole key to BBC's success. Manhattan Beach Brewing couldn't stay alive. Same for Huntington Beach Brewing and Newport Beach Brewing. Furthermore, DTLA today has a handful of great breweries from Mumford to Arts District to Boomtown, but just like Nibble Bit bit the big one a decade ago, even today's hotbed wasn't enough to keep Iron Triangle afloat, which recently announced it's for sale. Through it all, Bonaventure has been quietly brewing in the shadows. Not really the shadows since its coolest feature is that it's on the hotel's fourth floor rooftop patio. (Shameless teaser plug: your intrepid columnist is staging a unique beer festival up there later this fall, which isn't why I interviewed Blackwell but, rather, came about as a result of the interview.)

The difficulty in reaching the rooftop locale makes it easy for even LA's most strident craft brewery tickers to have missed this spot, despite being less than a mile walk from Modern Times' Dankness Dojo. Ha ha! I said "walk."

That part earlier about Blackwell not having a car? It's true. He rides his beach cruiser one mile to Belmont and when he brews at Bonaventure, he cruises in the company van. (Helpful note: the red and blue line station at 7th Street/Metro Center is two blocks from the Bonaventure.) From the parking lot, he has to ride three different elevators. The ground-to-sky glass hotel can feel like scrambling through a hamster habitrail trying to find the dang brewery tasting room. And once you arrive, there's no flight of hazies to greet you (of course BBC does offer IPAs as Blackwell's rotating seasonals are always an IPA). But you'll also never find some port-barrel aged quad spiced with pink peppercorns and guava seeds or the like.

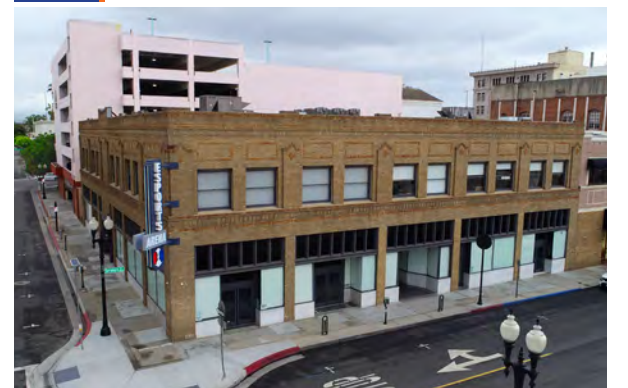
"I'm making the classics," says Blackwell. "The ones that paved the way for all these foo-foo beers." Here it's important to note that Blackwell, who lives very near Torrance and by extension, the world class breweries like Smog City and Monkish, calls them "fantastic." But fantastic beer doesn't actually require lactose or vanilla or cryo hops. It doesn't even require an expensive QC lab. "My lab's my nose and my mouth...I make clean beer. Dry, crisp and refreshing. But always clean." If you wanna taste what LA beer tasted like before there was an LA Beer Week, come to the BBC. And, of course, that could either be Belmont Brewing Co or Bonaventure Brewing Co.

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, where he's teaching UCSB's first beer-tasting class.

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FOOD PAIRINGS

REGIONAL CHINESE AND EASTSIDE BREWS

by Trevor Hagstrom & Maggie Rosenberg

The San Gabriel Valley was the original “ethnoburb.” It was the first Chinatown in America that wasn’t actually in town. Dubbed “Little Taipei” in the 1980s, these suburbs of the Eastside were first labeled a Chinatown as a scheme to sell real estate to Taiwanese expats. In the decades since, a legitimate Chinatown has spread through Monterey Park, Alhambra, Rosemead, San Gabriel, and Arcadia to become a sprawling network of Chinese communities. It’s just a few miles East of Downtown Los Angeles, but, culturally, it’s a world away.

One thing that the San Gabriel Valley has in common with Downtown Los Angeles is a growing scene of craft breweries. Several of the breweries out on the Eastside are forging brews with an awareness of the surrounding scene of regional Chinese eateries. The Hawaiian inflected stylings of the Ohana Brewing Company are well conceived to go with Asian dishes of all sorts. Their refreshing Spa Water Saison that is flavored with cucumber and lemongrass, perfect for lighter dishes. The Darkside of Sesame is an imperial stout brewed with black sesame, a favorite seasoning for Chinese sweets. It is a great match for dishes seasoned with soy sauce. Ohana Brewing, like the cuisine of the Hawaiian islands that inspired the brewery, bridges the flavors Eastern and Western Pacific.

The Pacific Plate Brewing Company in Monrovia actually collaborated with “7” Bangkok Craft Brewery to

forge a beer inspired by Thailand’s famous tom yum soup. Using the same aromatics that Thai chefs employ, like kaffir lime, galangal, and lemongrass, the brewers create a beer that pays tribute to a cuisine that is at home in Los Angeles as it is in Asia. As breweries weave their way into the cultural fabric of the San Gabriel Valley.

China is an enormous country with millennia of culinary traditions to draw from each with different very flavors. They all demand different beer pairings.

Sichuan and Hunan cooking is very spicy. Many dishes are completely covered with dried chilis, and sometimes Sichuan cuisine is cited as the world’s hottest food. Sichuan food is great with malty rich beers like Belgian Abbey styles. Perhaps try a glass milk stout to help sooth the burn? Do make sure to steer clear of dishes that make heavy use of Sichuan peppercorns. This floral spice makes Sichuan food fragrant and unique, but it also completely numbs your mouth, which distorts a beer’s flavor. Progress Brewing in El Monte is very close to the Sichuan restaurants of Monterey Park. They brew several Belgian style ales, including Pony Express, a strong golden ale that is robust enough to stand up to fiery, but not necessarily numbing cuisine.

Southern Chinese cuisine is the most delicate regional style. Fresh vegetables and dumpling artistry typify the graceful cuisine from the



Chengdu Taste

Photo Credit: Maggie Rosenberg

Cantonese corner of China. Dim sum was designed to be eaten with tea, but it’s just as great with beer that has tea like aromas spicy, ester-rich beers like Hefeweizen, Saison or Belgian Witbier. Ogopogo Brewing is right in the village of San Gabriel. Their Boeman, Belgian White Beer is a great dim sum brew. They brewery is just down Rosemead Boulevard from go-to dim sum spot, Sea Harbor Seafood Restaurant.

On the East Coast of China there are several traditional schools of cooking, from the Shandong to Fujian. These Eastern styles are unified by regular use of vinegar and rice wine for seasoning. For these sharp dishes, an astringent beer like an IPA is great. The Incline Ale from Mt. Lowe Brewing Company in Arcadia is a perfect match. Mt. Lowe is Arcadia’s first brewery, and the town was also home of the first American branch of Shanghai dumpling expert Din Tai Fung. Mt. Lowe’s hoppy brews are perfectly suited for pairing with soup dumplings and black vinegar.

A large chunk of China is made up of the rural Western provinces, which are populated by ethnic Uighurs rather than Han Chinese. Their cuisine is informed by their adherence to Islam (no pork) and the arid environment of

the surrounding Gobi desert. Lamb and bread are common ingredients here. Meat pies are a British pub classic, and they are also a traditional staple of the Western Chinese diet. You can find these pies at Omar Restaurant, just a couple of miles from Ohana Brewing. A Xinjiang-style meat pie with a rich dark beer like the Black Coral Stout is just perfect.

China is the world’s largest beer market. Unfortunately, their beer selection is still very much dominated by a few large breweries that brew beer that is lighter and more watery than even “Light” American Adjunct Lager. Southern California is lucky to have access to some excellent Chinese cookery, along with fresh craft beer to pair it with. Thanks to the expanding scene of Eastside craft brews, it’s getting easier to enjoy these together.

Trevor Hagstrom and Maggie Rosenberg are food, beverage, and travel content creators who specialize in local foodways. Trevor writes and Maggie takes photos. Their combined experience has seen them organizing beer festivals, designing beverage menus, and exploring some of Europe’s oldest breweries. Examples of their work can be found at www.tandmworks.com. Give them a follow on Instagram @tandm_works

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