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THE (LIQUID) GRAVITATIONAL FORCE OF BRENDAN GOUGH



by Daniel Drennon

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I think I involuntarily emitted a derisive laugh. After all, the FW Invitational is what I call my Christmas in June. It is singularly my favorite day of each and every year. Forty-plus of the best breweries on the planet serving their sublime brews to the best beer fans in the universe. It is perfection.

So how, after that day, could I possibly be impressed by some 20-year old microbrewery in SLO?

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[full cover story online]

Brendan Gough and Black is Beautiful collab beer with SLOBREW

Photo Credit: Dylan Grant of SLOBREW

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COVER STORY

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The first easy observation that perhaps my brewer pal was not on crack were the medals on the wall behind the bar: 2015 GABF Gold Medal for Monterey Street Pale Ale; 2016 World Beer Cup Gold Medal for Lucky Day IPA;

2016 GABF Gold Medal for General Schwarz German Schwarzbier; 2016 GABF Silver Medal for Monterey Street Pale Ale; 2017 GABF Gold Medal for Monterey Street Pale Ale; 2018 GABF Bronze Medal for Lucky Day IPA; and, oh yeah, 2019 Bistro IPA Festival Gold Medal for Lucky Day IPA. Yeah, yeah. Couple of these came after my visit, but you get the point.

The second sign that this was a wise stop was the arrival of Beachwood brewmaster Julian Shrago and his wife Fauna. Shrago is easily one of the most decorated and critically acclaimed brewers over the past ten years, so when he shows up to drink your beer, especially the day after FWIBF, the cat is, as they say, out of the bag. You have arrived as a brewer, and then some.

I don't need to tell you that Gough's line up of beers lived up to the hype. And then some.

This born and raised local kid had parlayed his award-winning homebrews into a shift brewer job at Firestone Walker for three years, and then took the helm at CCB for five years where he had quietly and, somehow under the radar, evolved into one of the very best brewers anywhere. Now what?

What would the next challenge be since emerging from the long shadow of mighty Firestone Walker just up the 101?

Answer. His own brewery. Liquid Gravity. He and his wife Celeste, aka The Hop Witch, bought local SLO brewery Tap It! and opened late last year. Most new breweries do not produce world class beer right out of the gate. There is usually a dialing it in period, even for an accomplished brewer. But Gough again defied gravity, oops, defied the odds and Liquid Gravity beer is already as good as it gets.

DRENNON: Where were you born and raised?



Brendan and Celeste Gough

Photo Credit: Jolie Hackney

GOUGH: I was born and raised in San Luis Obispo.

DRENNON: What were you into as a kid?

GOUGH: When I was young, I was definitely into sports. I played travel baseball and basketball until high school. By the time I got into high school I had largely lost interest in team sports and really got into skateboarding and snowboarding.

DRENNON: What, where and when was your first beer experience?

GOUGH: My first real beer experience was in Munich, Germany in 2002 at the age of 21. My buddy and I were

on a backpacking trip through Europe. During our first day in Munich, we wandered into a beer garden and spent most of the afternoon drinking liter steins of proper Bavarian Hefeweizen. I remember being blown away by this magical cloudy beer that tasted liked spiced banana bread. I had never tasted anything like it. At the time I was drinking mass produced American lagers and I had no idea a beer could be so flavorful without being overly bitter. That day changed my entire life. I came back to the States on a mission to find more flavorful beer; eventually finding IPAs, sours and everything else.

DRENNON: How and when did you

decide to become a brewer?

GOUGH: Like many brewers, I started out homebrewing. I was studying Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing at Cal Poly. My mom gave me an old homebrew kit that had been in the garage for a decade. She had purchased it for my dad and he never used it. As soon as I got the kit, I started doing research online and was instantly hooked, spending every free moment I had listening to brewing podcasts, and honing my skills using an igloo cooler and a turkey fryer. After I graduated all I wanted to do was make beer. By that time, I had a part time gig at a local brewery and even though I didn't know how to turn my passion into a career yet, I was hell bent on making it happen.

DRENNON: *How did you get the job at Firestone Walker, how long were you there and what did you learn from brewmaster Matt Brynildson and brew captain Dustin Kral?*

GOUGH: I was at Firestone Walker for almost three years. When I got my interview up there I had basically no experience and no formal education at all. I was fresh out of college with my Marketing degree but all I wanted to do was make beer. Fortunately, I had

a couple of good friends named Mark Fischer and Max Montgomery who I knew through the homebrew circuit and they both knew Matt Brynildson. As the story goes, Matt was looking to hire a brewer and Mark and Max had recommended me. At the time I was entering every local homebrew competition that I possibly could. I had won best in show at the Mid State Fair with a Kolsch and was becoming increasingly more obsessed with the art and science of brewing. So, even with very little experience and no formal brewing education I was able to parlay my reputation as a homebrewer into an interview at Firestone and the rest is history.

I credit Matt and Dustin with much of what I have been able to achieve as a professional brewer. Nobody executes with greater precision than the boys in Paso Robles. There's obviously a lot of new brewers out there these days giving the old guard a run for their money but I'll be damned if you could find a better group of brewers than they have. To me, they are the process gods in this industry. No disrespect to anyone else but if you're having a fantasy brewer draft, Brynildson and DK go number one.

DRENNON: *How did you become the head brewer at Central Coast*



Brewmaster Brendan Gough

Photo Credit: Matthew Garcia @momentsinbeer

Brewing?

GOUGH: After brewing production at Firestone Walker for a few years I think I really just wanted to make my own beer and CCB was my opportunity to do that. I had known the owner for a long time and took the Head Brewing job there in 2014.

DRENNON: *During your time at CCB, you won a number of World Beer Cup and Great American Beer Festival medals in highly competitive categories. To what do you attribute that success?*

GOUGH: Honestly, there are a lot of factors, but I think being able to use your palate to make small recipe tweaks to improve the beers is really important. Other than that, building a recipe that fits into the style and making sure you have good, fresh raw materials and minimizing oxygen pickup are all really important as well.

DRENNON: *I was about to go out on a limb (not really) and guess that recipe development is one of the most important elements in brewing fantastic beer. How did you develop and cultivate that skill?*

GOUGH: I draw a strong connection between having a good palate and successful recipe development. One leads the other. If a beer doesn't taste the way I like, I need to decide what about it needs to change. To me, this is really the essence of brewing. Experimenting with new processes, recipes, and techniques to continually try and make better beer. Any given recipe will taste different on every brewhouse so it's up to the brewer to be able to understand what they are tasting and make adjustments.

DRENNON: *Between work ethic and talent, which do you think is more important as a brewer?*

GOUGH: That's a tough question. I think there are some inherent talents you need to possess in order to be a good brewer but I also think you can make up some shortcomings with work ethic. This question also brings up the interesting topic of what constitutes talent in a brewer. In other industries, I think talent is easier to measure. There are a lot of intangible qualities that go into being a good brewer. I know



Yesenia Rodriguez (left), Monica Duggan, Melissa Clark, Celeste and Brendan Gough

Photo Credit: Matthew Garcia @momentsinbeer



Celeste Gough at Liquid Gravity Photo Credit: Matthew Garcia @momentsinbeer

(COVER STORY continued)

a lot of brilliant, engineer types that make bad beer because their palate is garbage. On the other hand, having a good palate certainly doesn't make you a good brewer in and of itself. Much of what I do is efficiency evaluation and problem solving but if the beer is not good does being efficient really even matter? Ultimately, I think the most important traits for a brewer to possess are a good palate, good problem-solving skills, a mechanical mind, an understanding of science and a strong work ethic. All of these pieces sort of work together.

DRENNON: *So now you and your wife Celeste, aka The Hop Witch, own your own place. Liquid Gravity in your hometown, San Luis Obispo. That has to be equally exciting and challenging, especially when you toss in a pandemic during your first few months of operation. Tell us how you pulled it off.*

GOUGH: It has certainly been a challenging time to open a new brewery. I think we've been able to hold it all together by remaining fluid and being able to adapt as more balanced distribution plan moving forward.

DRENNON: *What are your goals and also your biggest challenges (pre-COVID and during COVID)?*

GOUGH: The goal for our entire team every day is to make the best beer that we possibly can and to stay positive and have fun while we're doing it. We have an incredible team of all-stars that left good jobs to come and embark on this journey together. The challenges seem to change daily. As anyone who has worked in a brewery can

tell you, it comes with a fair amount of stress. Tight deadlines, equipment failing and everything else that goes along with it. That's why I think it's so important to build that culture of family and friendship within the brewery. It's much easier to navigate these challenges when everyone is on the same page and working towards the same goals.

DRENNON: *Do you have a favorite beer style to drink versus to brew, or are they one and the same?*

GOUGH: They are one and the same for me. My favorite styles to drink and brew are crisp and hoppy - German Pilsners, West Coast IPAs and Pale Ales. That said, I enjoy brewing and drinking a wide variety of styles and really take pride in trying to brew the best examples of each style at Liquid Gravity. On our menu board you'll almost always find a hazy IPA, a fruited kettle-sour, and an imperial stout. We offer a wide range of beers and I enjoy trying to make the best versions of those styles that we possibly can.

DRENNON: *Since your IPA and hoppy beer resume establishes you as something of a "Hop God," what is your professional assessment of the West Coast-style versus the New England-style?*

GOUGH: (laughs) I don't know about that but I do think there are some really awesome things about both styles. When hazy IPAs started making waves, I got on the hazy train pretty early and started making them regularly at CCB in 2016. I think the softer bitterness and fruit-forward expression of the yeast creates a fun and approachable canvas to present the hops. I drank a bunch of them when

they first came out but eventually started getting a little "hazed out". That said, I think brewing hazy IPA helped me improve our West Coast beers also. Back in the day West Coast IPA felt like a bitterness arms race. Everybody was trying to out-bitter the next guy which led to a lot of overly-bitter and undrinkable beers. I also think the low bitterness trend of hazy IPAs helped to create a more modern interpretation of West Coast IPAs. These new takes on the style are much more aroma and flavor driven than the overly-bitter IPAs of old. I also think a lot of drinkers who drink mostly hazy IPAs would love this modern take on West Coast beers but just haven't been exposed to them yet. A lot of people think they don't like West Coast IPAs because they don't like the bitterness but there are a lot of really great breweries pumping out awesome West Coast beers that aren't an all-out assault on your palate.

DRENNON: *I'm almost positive you have zero free time, but what do you enjoy doing most when it is not surveying the world from your own brew deck or most excellent outdoor patio at Liquid Gravity?*

GOUGH: My free time is certainly limited these days. I do still try to get out for a round of golf from time to

time. I also have my wife, two kids and three cats at home, so if I'm not at the brewery I'm usually trying to get some family time in.

DRENNON: *Let's play the desert island beer game. You can only take four, so what would they be?*

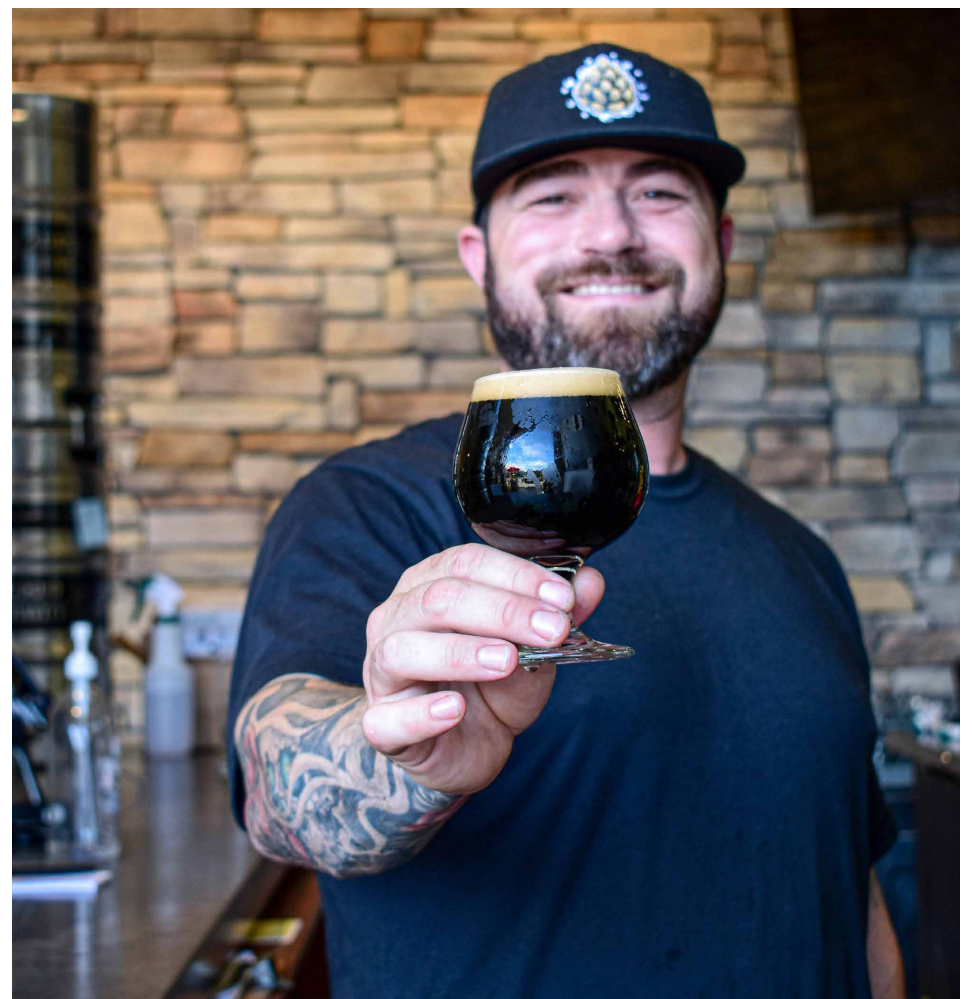
GOUGH: Hmm...I haven't done this in a while. I'm going to have to go with Tipopils - Birrificio Italiano (runner-up is Pivo Pils from Firestone but Tipopils was the inspiration for Pivo so we'll go with the original); any West Coast IPA from the OG Alpine pub; Death & Taxes by Moonlight Brewing and, last but not least, Cantillon Gueuze.

DRENNON: *Excellent list! So, if you weren't a brewer, what would you be?*

GOUGH: A ballerina. And a damn good one.

DRENNON: *(laughs) I'd like to say I can picture that, but I'd rather not. Let's wrap up with your own assessment of yourself. If you had to describe yourself in one word or phrase, what would it be?*

GOUGH: I just asked my wife. She said neurotic. I think I'll get a second opinion.



Brendan Gough and Black is Beautiful collab beer with SLOBREW Photo Credit: Dylan Grant of SLOBREW

PROFILE

14 CANNONS FIRING FANTASTIC BEERS

by Greg Wellins

It was a lazy Sunday on vacation in Manhattan Beach recently, and I decided to take advantage of the pandemic traffic (or lack thereof) and check out 14 Cannons, a brewery in Westlake Village that I'd been meaning to visit since it opened in October, 2017. Less than an hour later, I was ordering my first beer on the back patio of my 842nd brewery. It was late on a very hot afternoon, and I was busy taking photos for my Instagram page. As I positioned my beer for that perfect shot I always strive to take, I apologized to a guy sitting nearby as I was arguably within six feet of him and I didn't want to violate our current unwritten, yet very real, social-distancing contract. The guy turned out to be Marshall Haraden, the owner of 14 Cannons.

It turns out that Marshall also owns The Marshall Group, a general contracting firm that, among other things, specializes in brewery construction. The fact that I was wearing a t-shirt from one of the breweries that his firm constructed didn't hurt (Imperial Western, a gorgeous brewery located in LA's Union Station), but he seemed more than willing to discuss 14 Cannons

with me, and I was more than willing to learn about it.

First, this isn't your typical brewery. Oh, it's in your average commercial complex, but once inside you are transported to one of the more beautiful breweries you'll ever see. That is because, in addition to being a working brewery, it is also a brewery showroom, showcasing various brewing vendors' equipment for prospective brewery owners. From the copper bar to the artwork to the brewing equipment (most notably the lagering tank) all out in the open, you may spend considerable time just gazing at the place!

But, as always, the most important aspect to every brewery is, how good is the beer itself? I'm glad to say 14 Cannon offers a delicious lineup of beers.

I always like to learn where the brewer has previously worked. Although he wasn't in that day, Marshall told me that head brewer Nic Bortolin came from critically-acclaimed Figueroa Mountain, a brewery whose beers I've enjoyed for years. So, I was not surprised that I loved the beers I tried, especially their flagship West Coast



14 Cannons brewery

Photo Credit: Greg Wellins

Nic Bortolin, Co-Founder/Head Brewer
Photo Courtesy of 14 CannonsMarshall Haraden, Owner
Photo Courtesy of 14 Cannons

IPA (Tyrannicide) and the award-winning Marooner Marzen. If I didn't have an hour to drive post-brewery-visit, I would have tried more. That said, I did leave with 4-packs of 14 Cannons Coffee IPA and a triple IPA, Wreck Yo Ship, both of which I've since enjoyed.

I asked Marshall about the origin of the name 14 Cannons. And, boy, did he tell me a fascinating story! Turns out that his great-great-great uncle, Jonathan Haraden, commanded, in 1776, a ship called the Tyrannicide, known for hunting down tyrants. Anyone want to guess the number of cannons on the Tyrannicide? After learning all of this, I felt like saying the Pledge of Allegiance before my next beer, but that would have been weird, so I just mentally made a toast to great-great-great uncle J. I called

my Mom in Upstate NY after to see if I had any great-great-great uncles (or aunts) in the family lineage who did anything similar. Disappointingly, she told me that we came from a family of cheese-makers, but I digress.

Why do I go to so many breweries? Because, probably just like you if you are reading this on Beer Paper's website, I am a true beer geek. And you just never know when you are going to discover a new (or old) gem of a brewery. 14 Cannons proves that point. Fantastic beers, fun and interesting people, a beautiful taproom, and a phenomenal back-story that dates back to the Revolutionary War.

I highly recommend you make the trek to Westlake Village and see for yourself.

INLAND EMPIRE

IT'S THE WORST OF TIMES, BUT GREY WOLF BREWING MAKES ACCLAIMED START

by Andrew Smith

Believe it or not, there's been quite a bit of activity on the Inland Empire beer front – even during Covid. Oscar's Brewing (Temecula), Hops & Spokes (Yucaipa), and Lake Arrowhead Brewing have all opened this summer. Solaris (Murrieta), Joshua Tree Brewery, and Three Marm (Crestline) have expanded their soft openings. And Temecula Brewing is currently clearing its final hurdles. If you're keeping score at home, Brew Rebellion and Sanctum have closed

February 2020 seems like another era. That's when GreyWolf Brewing opened up in Norco. I'd been talking to Chad Adams prior to the opening. We knew that the Inland Empire was ripe for growth, all you needed to do was make good beer. Covid had other plans.

Circumstances deferred my first visit until June, but I'd been getting rave feedback from trusted sources. A homebrewer turned pro, Adams had hit the ground running. It helped that he landed on the location vacated by Sons of Liberty Aleworks, after they moved to Tennessee. He had to install his own equipment, but it was logistically perfect and already had a well-primed, thirsty clientele. More importantly, he was making great beer, right from the outset.

It's a diverse portfolio that ranges from solid lagers to exceptional IPA's and strong ales. Adams likes traditional styles, but he also has his own ideas of how things should taste. Tartarus Warhammer has already established itself as the brewery's flagship. It was originally Adams' homebrew award-winning Belgian Tripel. Leading with a Tripel is rare and unintentional, but Warhammer is already crafting its own fan club and reputation across the IE. I'll let Chad tell the rest.

BEER PAPER: *Thanks for talking to us today, Chad. You opened your brewery right before the pandemic hit. Has that changed your business model.*

ADAMS: 100%. Initially, my plan was all onsite sales, with cans as a supplement. After five weeks, the pandemic changed all of that. Thankfully, I'd built flexibility into the business and was able to switch over to can sales, without actually missing any business days.

BEER PAPER: *You probably haven't sold as much beer as planned, but have you found it to be more work than you envisaged?*

ADAMS: Sales are at about 35% of projections. The amount of work is about two to three times greater. I had intended to hire on at least one taproom assistant by this point, but with the reduced income, cannot afford the expense. Canning manually takes up a lot of time, but is absolutely essential. The frustrating part about the changes are that it takes some time to figure out exactly what the requirements are, develop a plan to comply, and implement.

BEER PAPER: *You've quickly developed a strong reputation in your immediate surroundings. How has the reception been?*

ADAMS: The community of Norco is AMAZING. They really do love their craft brewery. They are the reason I am still able to stay open. Norco is very community focused, call it a small-town vibe. They take care of each other, and have included me and the brewery in that community. Making great beer and a memorable experience, I believe, are the main ingredients in the recipe.

BEER PAPER: *Covid really hindered everyone's travel plans, but have you seen drinkers coming from further afield?*

ADAMS: I have started to see an increase, yes. Partially due to social media presence, but also with partnering food trucks from outside the area. Great beer and the experience help keep people interested. The issue is letting people know we are here.



Chad Adams (Owner/Brewer)

Photo Credit: Chad Adams

Word of mouth, or organic growth was part of the plan. With all that has happened, the consumer is more critical about where they spend their money, and whether it is worth the risk. Customers telling your story and how focused you are about safety and sanitation are key to calming those fears.

BEER PAPER: *You're one of very few brewers I can think of that leads with a Belgian Tripel. I think it's one of your favorites too. Can you tell us the story behind it?*

ADAMS: Tartarus Warhammer was my first original recipe as a homebrewer. I have always been an incessant researcher when it comes to the history of a style. I had picked up "Brew Like A Monk" by Stan

Hieronymus as I was curious about the general Belgian theory of creating recipes. Belgian brewers view style guidelines as just that, a guideline, compared to the German laser focus on adhering to tradition. I feel that the Belgians allow for a little more personal expression. The other side of this is that I was not 100% pleased with commercial offerings. To my palate, each offering either had too much of one character or lacked what I felt the style should have. Today's version is actually the same recipe I first created. I scaled it up to my 5-barrel system, and despite years of experimentation, have never improved upon the original. Some of the techniques used in the process go against the grain of "how beer is supposed to be brewed," but I think the results speak for themselves.

BEER PAPER: *When I tasted your Oatmeal Pale – which I enjoyed - I immediately asked you if it was a hazy that didn't haze. Can you tell us more about that and how it relates to your brewing styles?*

ADAMS: Appropriate to the style, I prefer my beers to be as clean and bright as possible. The development of this recipe stems from the understanding of what each ingredient provides to the overall result. One of my tenets is that if you don't know what an ingredient will provide, don't use it. To me, American Pale Ale is generally too bitter and thin. I wanted to create a fuller experience, which generally is provided by today's NEIPA style. I jokingly call this beer a double marketing fail. People see Oatmeal and immediately move to the next menu item. Those who get past that, see Pale Ale and, again, keep reading.

BEER PAPER: *You've got a few good brewery cities around you (Corona, Riverside, Redlands, Cucamonga), but you're the only one in Norco. What made you decide to set up there?*

ADAMS: As my wife pointed out, Norco chose us more than we chose Norco. We are both outdoorsy. My wife actually spent her teenage years and her college years living in Norco, so we were familiar with the mentality of the community. The main factor was that the previous brewery in this location, Sons of Liberty, had announced that they would be moving. I had been actively searching for a location for about a year, so the timing was right.

BEER PAPER: *Can you tell us more about your secondary hobbies, like gardening and DIY, and how they translate into what you do at the brewery?*

ADAMS: The gardening stems from my mother. Growing up, we didn't have a whole lot, and this was a way to help provide food for the family. It also taught me that fresh produce tasted better, and started me down the path of cooking and ultimately to creating recipes for wine and beer. I actually started making wine three years before my first attempt at beer. The DIY side came from my father. He was always working on projects in the garage or fixing something that had broken. I am curious by nature, so I was always taking things apart to figure out how



GreyWolf Brewing entrance

Photo Credit: Andrew Smith

they worked. When it came time to install and run a brewery, those lessons I learned continue to help me out. This is the business part of me speaking, but when one can fix a problem without having to "call a guy," you save money and time.

BEER PAPER: *How do you feel about our Inland Empire beer scene? Is there a message you'd like to send to our larger readership further west?*

ADAMS: Our beer game is strong out here. Many of us are fairly young in our brewing careers, but we have a solid understanding of the process and are focused on quality. Many of us share ideas and work together, in addition to each having our specialties and strengths. We are focused on raising the bar and sharing our talents with the world.

BEER PAPER: *When we spoke last you said you were working on Seasons – I see you have one on tap now. What else do you have planned?*

ADAMS: I have a Festbier and an Italian Pilsner on my current brew schedule, once I have fermenters open up. With the decrease in sales, I have had to use my tanks for storage. I also just picked up some Kveik yeast that

I will be using to make a Hazy IPA; hopefully, I will have this brewed in the next month. I am making my first seltzer this week (pilot batch). I'll let you know how it turns out!

Raised in England, Andrew Smith "thought" he knew everything about beer before moving to the United States. He covers food for Locale Magazine and runs a local Coachella Valley blog at CVBeerScene.com



Chad Adams (Owner/Brewer)

Photo Credit: Chad Adams

SAN DIEGO ALLIANCE

CULTURE COMES TO MANHATTAN BEACH

by Brandon Hernandez



Mosaic IPA

Photo Courtesy of Culture Brewing

Originally published in sandiegotobeer.news

San Diego brewery opening coastal taproom in Manhattan Beach

Culture Brewing opened to the public in Solana Beach's Cedros Design District in 2012. At the time, it seemed like any other local brewery, but its owners had a long-term plan to build

taprooms in coastal communities and sell every drop of its beer across Culture's network of bars. And they've stuck to that plan. Over the past eight years, Culture has opened tasting rooms in Encinitas and Ocean Beach. The latter shuttered earlier this year (and was quickly snapped up by Chula Vista-based Novo Brazil Brewing), but by next week Culture's oceanside empire will be three strong once more



Passionfruit Hazy IPA

Photo Courtesy of Culture Brewing



La Cerveza Lager

Photo Courtesy of Culture Brewing

when it opens its first taproom outside San Diego County in Los Angeles' Manhattan Beach community.

"We believed there wasn't a lot of real estate left in San Diego, especially the coastal communities, so we began to get excited about the possibility of expanding further north," says Director of Operations Whitney Johndro. "We had been looking for a new space to call home up and down the California coast and believed Manhattan Beach was another city that fit our brand perfectly and was similar to those of our other locations. Our new location is close to the ocean in a high-density shopping and walking downtown area, and a popular family destination, which we love so much."

The new 2,300-square-foot spot will resemble Culture's other locations, utilizing wood, concrete, steel and barrels, with plants hanging from the rafters and stools as the primary seating option. It will also feature a cold box outfitted with glass so that patrons can see the kegs, and doors so they can reach right in to grab beer to-go. Amenities like that will have

to wait until Culture is able to have its new spot open for more than the curbside pickup that will be its only form of sale initially. But they will put this time to good use, working on creating an outside patio area and a social-distancing plan for on-site service. They plan to partner with local restaurant and food vendors, as well as artists, small businesses and South Bay charities.

All of Culture's venues will soon be stocked with a variety of canned beers. The company has canned special releases in the past, but moving forward, customers can expect to see a greater variety of styles being funneled into aluminum. The array releasing on September 4 will include La Cerveza lager, Mosaic IPA and 2X Hazy IPA. Pilsner and Passion Fruit Haze IPA will be two of the five beers offered during the next round of canned Culture beers. As cans keep rolling out, expect to see more hazy IPAs and higher-alcohol fan favorites.

Culture Brewing's new taproom is located at 327 Manhattan Beach Boulevard in Manhattan Beach