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by Brandon Hernández

Over the past year, as Executive Editor of San Diego Beer News, I have spoken extensively with a great many brewery owners who are struggling to contend with numerous facets of the COVID-19 pandemic. While resilient, innovative and outwardly positive, the lengthiness of this seemingly never-ending ordeal—with its plethora of twists and turns care of directions, regulations and stay-at-home mandates from state government—have ground them between the rock and hard place they have occupied for far too long. So long that, for many, their hopes of their businesses outliving the pandemic are slimming to a whisker.

The recently enacted stay-at-home order has greatly accelerated the erosion of these entrepreneurs' chances and, even following a confusing court ruling indicating breweries might be able to operate without fear of license suspension from some (but not all) government agencies, it presents an impossible situation for brewery and brewpub owners.

[full cover story online]

Another Impossible Choice



Let's Give 2020 The Boot!

Photo Courtesy of Bagby Beer

PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL BREWERY

OC BEAT

SOUTH COUNTY OPENINGS

by David Mulvihill

Preface: Much of this column had been written prior to the most-recent manipulation of the state-established COVID-19 Restrictions in early December. After 12/6, we again find restaurants, pubs and breweries closed for onsite service. Your support via their to-go processes and purchasing of gift cards for those on your Christmas and holiday lists will help with their efforts to stay afloat.

Artifex on Del Mar

San Clemente's Artifex Brewing Co opened its satellite downtown tasting room in late November. The 1120 square foot space, located close to the corner of Del Mar and El Camino Real received initial approval for build-out from the city in August of 2019. Normal delays were obviously exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic. Artifex on Del Mar's intimate and well-appointed setting, reflecting a restored rustic mission/Ole Hanson style, is accommodating to the outdoor life we are growing accustomed to. The entire front unseals and tucks away, providing an airy, open, extended patio space. Expect all of



Artifex on Del Mar

Photo Credit: David Mulvihill



Rad Brat Dana Point

Photo Courtesy of Rad Brat

the fresh and currently offered Artifex brews prominently dispensing from 20+ taps behind the bar.

98 Avenida Del Mar, San Clemente

**Rad Brat:
Dogs, Brats, Sausages & Craft**

Briefly open for onsite consumption in early December, Rad Brat, in Dana Point, is an inspired craft beer focused restaurant model brought to us by a talented team dedicated to community, experience, and the best of craft beer.

Cameron Collins' (founder of Brew Ha Ha Productions) inspiration for Rad Brat came a few years ago while touring the Pacific Northwest with Brew Ha Ha festivals. In Tacoma, WA, The Red Hot was recommended as a great place for good food and beer. It possesses a similar concept and a resonating slogan, "Craft Beer. Hot Dogs. No Jerks." Cameron's description: "loud, cool and a little rambunctious!" He recalls becoming immediately enamored and vocalizing,



Rad Brat Dana Point

Photo Credit: David Mulvihill

“Someday, I’m going to open one of these in Southern California.” Someday has arrived.

Collins shared his vision with industry friends who were quickly onboard to join in fashioning the vision into reality. The team: Dylan Mobley (head brewer at Helmsman in Newport Beach and former head brewer for Anaheim’s Bottle Logic); Joe Wilshire (co-founder of Project Social and Docent Brewing Co); and Steve Martin (co-founder of Project Social and an investor in Docent Brewing Co).

Close to the ocean and community-centered within the La Plaza Park Complex, Rad Brat’s casual atmosphere promotes a welcoming, high energy, vibe. Roll-up garage door-style windows open onto a pleasant patio area, enhancing ocean breezes and indoor/outdoor feel. Bike racks accommodate those cruising in on beach cruisers and neighboring businesses catering to prospective Rad Brat clientele solidify a sense of community.

The plan for December was to open for outside service at first, because of heightened state COVID restrictions. Adjacent parking spaces were approved and licensed to expand the patio space and accommodate patrons. While the Rad Brat team did manage to soft-open for the 12/4 weekend, focus has quickly shifted to accommodating offsite to-go orders.

Reportedly, the city of Dana Point, in an effort to assist its restaurants and pubs, is considering lifting an ordinance that currently prohibits consumption of alcohol in city parks. This could prove beneficial to Rad Brat and other businesses that encircle La Plaza Park. Patrons would be able to order food and drinks to go and not have to venture far to enjoy.

A prominent 28 handle tap tower and bar runs the length of the indoor space. TV screens will typically stream surf, skate, seasonal snowboarding, etc., but, while not a sports bar, big games and matches will also be shown.

The menu provides an abundance of family-friendly choices. There are at least 10 different hot dog formulations, corn dog and cheese sticks. Those are countered by as many sausages and brats. One of the many compelling choices, the Angry Samoan, consists of fried SPAM, spicy mayo, jalapeño and

pineapple on an all-beef dog. Burgers, sandwiches and vegan choices also abound. Sides and salads are available too. Milk shakes and malts can top things off.

Plans are also in the works to have a couple of handles dispensing house beer at both Rad Brat and Project Social before long. Dylan’s award-winning talents will be tapped on the brewing end of things and the team is actively looking at adding a brewery to the mix.

Future plans also call for additional Rad Brat locations in other locales once the concept has been refined on the home-front.

Rad Brat: 34091 La Plaza, Dana Point

Project Social

Also dedicated to the best of craft beer (and coffee and food), Project Social has been open just over one year (7 of those months have been during the COVID19 pandemic). Thanks to a very supportive community and a great staff, they have managed to keep everyone employed. The concept for PS included building out a significant part of its space as patio. This proved both beneficial and crucial in surviving this crazy time. Its Unique Outdoor patio with olive trees provides a beer garden feel, and has promoted a level of non-pandemic normalcy.

Project Social: 24040 Camino Del Avion Suite J, Dana Point

Station Craft

Stay tuned for news of the soon to open Station Craft Brewery + Kitchen located very close to Rad Brat: 34150 Pacific Coast Highway, Dana Point.

David Mulvihill thirsts to experience and promote the best of craft beer. He also provides business-side support to local breweries and brewers guilds (reporting, excise tax, regulatory compliance, policies & personnel) (SoCalCraftBeer.com). david@socalcraftbeer.com



Rad Brat Dana Point

Photo Credit: David Mulvihill

SAN DIEGO BEER NEWS

ANOTHER IMPOSSIBLE CHOICE

by Branden Hernandez

Bagby Beer Co.'s owners explain hospitality businesses' dire need for immediate financial support from the government

Over the past year, as Executive Editor of *San Diego Beer News*, I have spoken extensively with a great many brewery owners who are struggling to contend with numerous facets of the COVID-19 pandemic. While resilient, innovative and outwardly positive, the lengthiness of this seemingly never-ending ordeal—with its plethora of twists and turns care of directions, regulations and stay-at-home mandates from state government—have ground them between the rock and hard place they have occupied for far too long. So long that, for many, their hopes of their businesses outliving the pandemic are slimming to a whisker.

The recently enacted stay-at-home order has greatly accelerated the erosion of these entrepreneurs' chances and, even following a confusing court

ruling indicating breweries *might be able* to operate without fear of license suspension from some (but not all) government agencies, it presents an impossible situation for brewery and brewpub owners.

Jeff and Dande Bagby (pictured above), the husband and wife who founded their eponymous, award-winning brewpub, Bagby Beer Co., on Oceanside's main drag, recently got in touch to share the frustrations that come with being a business that abides by the state's stay-at-home order, which they have since it was put in place. In doing so, they also noted how crucial it is that they and other hospitality interests like theirs receive financial support from the federal and state government so they and their employees can push through to the end of this dark chapter.

The following are their thoughts and concerns as well as a plea for much-needed assistance in lieu of further

restrictions and debilitating mandates from the powers that be.

Another Impossible Choice

As owners and operators of a local brewpub, we poignantly understand the extreme pressure being placed on San Diego County restaurants, brewpubs and breweries, among so many others in the hospitality industry. We face the same catastrophic consequences as others, but chose to abide by the latest health order because we felt it in the best interest of our community, including our guests, our staff and ourselves, to stay home as much as possible. We are gravely concerned about the rapid spread of the virus and the alarming impact that it is having on our already overburdened healthcare infrastructure, particularly the doctors and nurses fighting to save lives under impossible circumstances.

We acknowledge that once again being open for onsite dining will allow

us to draw critical revenue to help support our struggling business and our hard-working employees, but the costs and consequences of doing so are agonizing for us, and require that we capitulate our beliefs and values. It is paramount for us to preserve our integrity as responsible owner-operators, to protect our longstanding positive reputation as folks who look out for one another and genuinely care about the community, even when the decision to do so is detrimental to the business itself and our own personal livelihoods.

We seek to preserve our ability to make and sell beer under our beer-manufacturing license, and make and sell food under our health permit by avoiding regulatory sanctions. Both of these licenses are essential for any future we may hope to have in this industry. While we are confident and practiced in our ability to create and operate a safe business, and to



Bagby Taproom

Photo Courtesy of Bagby Beer

follow all recommended protocols appropriately, being open for onsite dining allows and encourages our community to minimize the severity of the crisis, to normalize defying guidance from health experts and political leaders, and otherwise decide as individuals what rules and laws are to be followed.

As a civilized society there are laws, rules, guidance and social norms we follow to maintain a safe, healthy, respectable community. Deciding as individuals that we get to choose which of these we adhere to and which we don't is risky, and it undermines our cultural values. We believe that until each individual takes personal responsibility for stopping the spread of the virus, it will continue to pervade our community, creating an even greater disaster for our healthcare workers and for citizens in our community who need care (both COVID and non-COVID patients), and will delay indefinitely any sort of return to "normal."

Our kind and loyal guests cannot begin to compensate through their patronage for the financial losses we are incurring, try though they might. Many are mindful of the stay-at-home order and are complying. They should not be made to feel responsible for the survival of our business, when what is really needed is significant financial support from our government. It is unreasonable and unfair to leave this at their feet, as though with just enough support we could sail through this current situation.

We have leveraged our landlords for relief, and we have begged utility companies, vendors and others for extensions and special arrangements. We have bootstrapped everything we can possibly bootstrap and have minimized expenses to every extent possible. We have also asked our employees to sacrifice, to accept fewer hours and lower income. It is simply not enough.



Bagby Beer Company

Photo Courtesy of Bagby Beer

It is critical that the State of California do its part. Funding is needed immediately to support businesses during this closure. Financial help will permit us to close, and stay closed, without facing the stark and threatening reality of losing everything

because we are complying with the health order. The stay-at-home order, if followed, will no doubt protect the community, it will save lives and minimize suffering. Owners should not have to trade off the survival of their businesses with the health and safety of our communities. This is a cruel and impossible choice with no winners.

California legislators, among other leaders and persons of power, have so far been either naïvely unaware or shockingly uninterested in the crisis we are facing. It must stop. It is time to take care of our industry and the millions of hard-working, dedicated employees, owners and operators who are in this unimaginable situation through no fault of their own, who have done everything asked of them and are still left with the bill at the end of the day.

Brandon Hernández is the founder and executive editor of San Diego Beer News (www.sandiegobeer.news), a comprehensive website providing daily coverage of the brewing industry as well as online resources (brewery lists and interactive map), and guest content from brewers, TV and radio stations, podcasts and professional organizations. He has been covering the craft-beer industry for 14 years and his award-winning work has been featured in dozens of national publications as well as nearly every magazine and newspaper in San Diego County. Follow San Diego Beer News on Instagram and Twitter (@sdbeernews) and sign-up for the free This Week in San Diego Beer email newsletter at www.sandiegobeer.news.



Bagby Taproom

Photo Courtesy of Bagby Beer