

PASSION, PROCESS AND PATIENCE

by Daniel Drennon

At the California Craft Brewers Cup awards this Fall, unsurprisingly Urban Roots Brewing and Smokehouse was named "Brewery of the Year" for the state of California. Sadly, Beer Paper was still dormant due to the Damnemic. Otherwise, Urban Roots would have surely been our October cover story. Now that the paper has risen like the proverbial Phoenix, we interviewed Urban Roots brewmaster and co-founder Peter Hoey as our year-end cover story.

Urban Roots launched in Sacramento way, way back in May, 2018 to high expectations, as well as excitement and anticipation, since Hoey and co-founder Rob Archie were already respected, if not revered, in the wonderful world of craft beer.

(full cover story on page 8)



Rob Archie and Peter Hoey (co-owners)

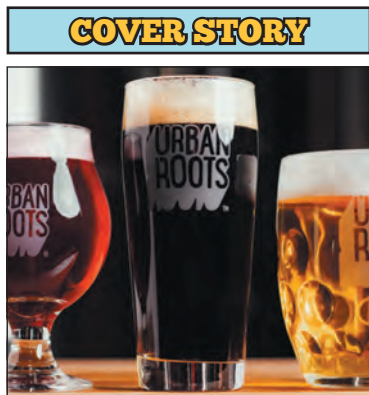
Photo Credit: Troy Cooper / Urban Roots



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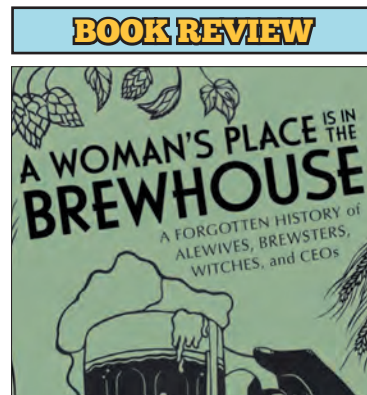
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LA BREWERS

Once Upon a Time in North Hollywood... A BREWERY IS BORN

by Tomm Carroll

Despite the relative proximity of North Hollywood to its world-famous namesake south of the Hollywood Hills, its LA Metro Rail accessibility, and some of the highest population density in LA County, heretofore NoHo has long been a no-show when it came to hosting a craft brewery within its borders. That is until Lawless Brewing opened its doors eight months ago.

“I felt like North Hollywood, especially, not having a brewery was underserved — quite literally,” said Lawless taproom manager Tyler White in an understatement during a recent interview *Beer Paper* conducted with the brewery team.

Co-owner Ben Wallace echoed that sentiment in discussing his impetus for launching Lawless in what some might consider an already saturated market: “I looked at most of those 90-plus breweries in LA County; they’re in certain areas. There’s a lot in the South Bay, a couple in Burbank. But there are some open pockets. And here in the Valley was a pocket where I always thought we were in need of a brewery. That was definitely a catalyst. So I didn’t look at it as oversaturation, I looked at it as an opportunity.”

An avid homebrewer for many years, Wallace was an occasional member of the Yeastsiders Homebrew Club. “I didn’t go to many meetings, because as somebody who had a day job, I wanted to be brewing all weekend,” he said. “I knew what my path was going to be early on.” As a matter of fact, the moniker for his brewery dates back to when a friend spotted a carboy of a fermenting brew in Wallace’s closet and remarked, “It’s lawless up in here.”

Wallace and his wife and brewery co-owner Whitney still maintain their day jobs as Emmy-winning producers of *Entertainment Tonight*, which is based in next-door Studio City, for the immediate future. And this being an industry town, it’s hard to disassociate too far from “the business.”

In fact, their sizeable 8,000-square-foot brewing facility — featuring a mezzanine overlooking the spacious taproom, complete with a 500-square-foot patio and parking lot — is located in the former home of Birns & Sawyer Film Equipment Rentals (which has moved to Roswell Ave. in Glassell Park — coincidentally, across the street from Eagle Rock Brewery). It’s located just off the intersection of Vineland Blvd. and Magnolia Ave., a few minutes from NoHo’s Arts District. “It just kind of worked out for us,” he explained. “We approached the landlord and said, ‘What do you think about a brewery in here? We would lease it off of you.’ We pitched him the whole plan. He loved the idea. And the building was ours.”

But then, as there always seems to be, there was an unanticipated plot twist. The CUP (conditional use permit) hearing for the proposed brewery was a few weeks before the Coronavirus pandemic hit the US and, as Wallace tells it, “Our permit came in the mail a couple days before the whole world was shut down — I thought, ‘Thank God we got that in under the buzzer.’” But while the build-out of the facility could not begin without a CUP, it was also contingent upon approval of the bank loan, which had not yet happened. And *everything* ground down to a near halt once the lockdown took affect in late winter 2020.

“Things took about a year when they were supposed to take three or four months,” he said. “We had already dropped so much time, effort and money into this that when the pandemic hit, there was no turning back and the only way out was to follow through. We didn’t get our brewing license until two weeks before we opened this past April.”

But during the delay, the Wallaces had the main members of their team-in-waiting ready and, well, waiting: head brewer Josh McCombs and aforementioned taproom manager White.



Ben and Whitney Wallace (co-owners)

Photo Credit: Tony Price Photography

“I had this ‘gentleman’s agreement’ with Ben,” explained McCombs, who had been advising and counseling Wallace for a year or two while he was brewing at Westlake Brewing Co. in Westlake Village and then the Brewery at Abigaile in Hermosa Beach, both of them now defunct. “I was able to consult for him, and then pilot-brewed in his garage brewery, working on things and tweaking recipes, before transitioning into Lawless on a full-time, salaried basis.”

Originally a scientist who ran a lab while homebrewing on the side, McCombs decided to change careers and attended the renowned brewing school, Siebel Institute of Technology in Chicago, where the education program includes a stint in Munich, Germany. Before moving to California, he was a brewer at Devils Backbone in Roseland, Virginia — and was working there when the then-indie brewery was acquired by Anheuser-Busch InBev in 2016.

(LA BREWERS continued on page 4)



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(LA BREWERS continued)

Lager-Forward

Given his brew-schooling at Siebel, particularly the concluding portion in Bavaria, it is obvious that McCombs would excel at brewing lagers, a skill he further honed at his first pro gig at DB, known for its bottom-fermenting beer styles. So it should come as no surprise that Lawless is what might be called a “lager-forward” brewery.

Among the lagers on draught in the brewery’s taproom during *Beer Paper’s* visit in mid-November were the appropriately named NoHo Boho Bohemian Pilsner (a Bronze medal winner in the 2021 California Craft Brewers Cup), Lawless Genuine Draft Premium Lager, Lightbulb Lager West Coast Pilsner, and Prost Malone Festbier — with Blacklight Czech Dark Lager (a Gold medal in the CCBC) on deck and Passport to Party Worldwide Pilsner available in cans. Lawless has also made a true-to-form Italian-style Pilsner called International Waters and a lager-like Kölsch named Academy Gold.

“The very first beer we brewed on our 15bbl system was a Mexican-style lager [a Vienna lager with adjuncts] called Flight of the Chancla, which we no longer have on tap but will bring back probably in the springtime,” McCombs said. “We chose that

because we really want to be lager-heavy at Lawless, which is kind of what we do — but with some ales peppered in there too.”

Traditionally, lagers take longer to ferment, and especially to cold-condition, than do ales and were not typically beers with which craft breweries launched. But that is no longer the case.

“Lagers do take longer to brew than ales, but I can actually turn a lager around in like three weeks,” the brewer explained. “The fermentation profile that I employ, if I just pay attention to temperature and gravity and track them every day, I can kind of coax that and ramp that temp up right where I end up with a very, very clean product at the end of the fermentation period. We use the 3470 yeast — it’s the workhorse of lager yeast that came from Weihenstephan in Germany. It’s awesome. It’s like the Chico ale strain of lager.”

And speaking of ales, Lawless has plenty of them on tap as well, from IPAs (West Coast, hazy, single, double) and Stouts to Saisons and Fruited Sours (a version of the latter, called Birns & Sour, won Bronze in the CCBC). And taproom manager White is intimately familiar with the lot — whether selling, slinging or explaining them.



Tyler White (taproom manager), Ben Wallace (co-owner), & Josh McCombs (head brewer)

Photo Credit: Tony Price Photography

“When people ask what kind of beer we make or what we specialize in, what I tell them is, ‘We make easy-drinking beer,’” he enthused. “That isn’t a given; not all beer is easy-drinking. You can drink a 5% Lager or 10% Imperial Nitro Stout. Anything that you try on our board, regardless of style, is going to drink well. And that’s something you just can’t take for granted at all breweries. I’m really proud of that.”

Wallace met White several years ago when he was a server at DTLA’s now-shuttered Mikkeller bar and, impressed by his beer knowledge, told White he wanted him to manage his brewery taproom when he opened one. White was game and kept in touch. He has also worked at Glendale Tap, Father’s Office, Walt’s Bar and Barcade.

Interestingly, his first job in beer in his early 20s was in a brewery taproom — at Lakefront Brewery in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where, ironically, “I hated beer; I just needed a job,” he confessed. “But fortunately, Lakefront gave me the opportunity and the tools to navigate the industry. And it wasn’t until after three months of working for them that I realized, ‘Oh my God, beer is my job!’”

So which of Lawless’ easy-drinking beers do its customers prefer? White, who has been observing taproom sales since April, offers the following answer:

“People do really enjoy our IPAs in general, both clear and hazy, but I think they are delightfully surprised by the quality of the hazies. And we have a really good time spreading the good word of lager to customers, regardless of whether they know the difference between a lager and ale.”

He continues: “However, it’s really important for us to not have a board of only IPAs or only lagers. Communities deserve variety and choice. Also, in a world of pastry sours and fruited seltzer grenade bombs, a lot of people have just never had good, beer-flavored beer; it is getting increasingly difficult to even find it. What I discovered is that people really enjoy a lot of the fundamental styles. And fortunately, what we offer in the taproom is a variety of styles — Belgian stuff, German stuff, sour stuff, light stuff, dark stuff...”

As for the best sellers on draught in the taproom, the team agrees that Magic Hour Hazy IPA tops the ales,



Jackie Cochran-McCombs (sales manager), Josh McCombs (head brewer), & Franklin (the brewery dog)

Photo Credit: Tony Price Photography

and NoHo Boho is the most popular lager. Outside of the taproom, in bars, restaurants, bottle shops and markets, the exceptionally clear and clean West Coast IPA Dankershim is the big seller.

Check out Lawless beers yourself to find your own favorite. For more info,

visit <https://lawlessbeer.com>

Tomm Carroll is a Los Angeles-based beer writer / judge / educator / historian / collector / traveler / drinker (not always in that order). He can be reached at beerscribe@earthlink.net.

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OC BEAT

Sending Out Light

by David Mulvihill



Andrew Bell with GABF awards and the award winning beer
Photo Courtesy of Radiant Beer Co



Radiant Beer Co's: (l-r) Andrew Bell, Jonas Nemura, Cambria Griffith
Photo Courtesy of Radiant Beer Co

Radiant Beer Co. opened softly in December of 2020 in Anaheim; close to the 5 Freeway at Lincoln. Taking up residence in the location formerly occupied by Towne Park Brewery, it is light years from same. The brewery embodies its name, exuding radiance throughout. Branding, brightly updated appointments, colors and murals provide a welcoming atmosphere for the community.

The team spent a great deal of time retooling, renovating and readying the space before opening.

Initially faced with opening in the midst of the pandemic, a phased introduction and focus for servicing customers began with to-go sales followed by an expanded outdoor space. As restrictions lifted, indoor areas also experienced welcoming rejuvenation and strategic spacing. Radiant's Director of Marketing Cambria Griffith shared that the imposed restrictions actually allowed them to run the service model at a slower introductory pace as their brand and brewery launched, and time for modifications and enhancements along the way.

Adding color & personality

Local Long Beach artist Jack Kelly was contracted for some of the artwork in and around the brewery. Kelly's bright, prominent and Instagram-worthy wall mural, *Sending Out the Light* has become a focal point. His illustrations have also been showcased on Radiant Beer Co's glassware and can labels. Expect more artwork and appointments as the Radiant point-of-view continues to unfold.

Taproom

In crafting the main tasting room, replacing and upgrading the legacy draft system assured freshness from keg to glass. Windows behind the bar present a prominent view of the brewhouse beyond. Future plans also envision adding a small kitchen to provide onsite food choices of flatbreads, tacos and such. Katie Boddy is Radiant's Tasting Room Manager.

Brewing Team

Director of Brewing, Andrew Bell, heads Radiant's award winning brewing team.

In its first year in business, accolades have already been received by Andrew and his team. Out of 133 entries, newcomer Radiant Beer Co took home 2021 Great American Beer Festival Gold in the Juicy/Hazy category for *Second That Emotion Hazy Pale Ale*. They also received the 0-250 Barrels Brewery and Brewer of the Year Award.

California Craft Brewers Cup 2021 also bestowed upon the team a 1st Place award for *So Much More S'Mores Pastry Stout* in the Chocolate Beer category.

Brewery

Cleanup and reconditioning of the brewery throughout was very apparent. The brewhouse system, equipment, plumbing, and canning line were painstakingly disassembled, thoroughly sanitized and repaired before brewing commenced. Larger fermenters were replaced with additional smaller ones in order to align with initial focus on providing a larger selection of unique beers and constantly changing varieties. A barrel program is also in play. Bourbon barrels have been filled, aging spirited beer for future release.

Common Ground & Vision

Many of you may recognize the three primary faces of Radiant Beer Co. All former veterans of The Bruery, Radiant's President, Jonas Nemura, Director of Brewing, Andrew Bell, and Director of Marketing, Cambria Griffith have reunited in creating Radiant Beer Co. Having launched very successful beers and projects together during their time at The Bruery, it made sense for them to rejoin and spark the light that has become Radiant Beer Co.

Jonas Nemura's brewing industry background began sometime before he became one of The Bruery's first employees. Living on the East Coast



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after graduating from Cornell, he was exploring what his next steps might be, career-wise. He considered law school, but given the expense, was looking at other paths he might follow. After some time working as a paralegal he decided he did not want to pursue law. Jonas had developed an affinity to craft beer via introductions at local tap houses, such as Ginger Man and Blind Tiger in New York. He was also home-brewing.

A later adventure with his wife found them working across the globe in New Zealand. Nemura went to work for a local brewpub that specialized in cask-conditioned ales. Like many brewers before him, his learning process started by encompassing all of the menial-but-necessary tasks involved.

Back stateside after 18 months and equipped with a desire to continue in brewing, he connected with Rick Smets (now owner/brewmaster at Stereo Brewing) when he was the head brewer at Left Coast Brewing in San Clemente. Nemura was hired at Left Coast where he worked for about a year. In 2008, Jonas met Patrick Rue and at the time Patrick was readying his soon-to-open The Bruery in Placentia. Assisting with many of the early brews and the multiple tasks of opening and running the new business, Nemura was eventually hired. As Brewer and Distribution Manager during the first year, he would grow with the brewery, serving as Director of Sales and Distribution, and Senior Director of Operations and Distribution until he left 10 years later to join Chapman Crafted (Orange) in mid-2018.

Andrew Bell spent over eight years at The Bruery. There he learned the ins and outs of professional brewing. He started in packaging and cellaring before graduating to the brew deck. Before leaving for this opportunity with Radiant, Bell managed The Bruery's Innovation Program, holding the reins on execution of all facets of brewing experimentation. Launch of the Offshoot Beer Co. brand (The Bruery's hoppy cousin) also took place during that time.

Cambria's Griffith's foray into Marketing and Promotions for the brewing world began with writing about craft beer while she was working at Warner Bros. Before long, and in the advent of Tony Yanow's L.A. County craft beer ventures that included Tony's Darts Away, Mohawk Bend and Golden Road Brewing (pre-AB-InBev), she accepted a position to assist him with marketing and promotions. She was also heavily involved with L.A. Beer Week for many years. Griffith left Golden Road for an opportunity at The Bruery. As Distribution Marketing Manager and Brand Marketing Manager, she worked with the team for almost 5 years, during building of Bruery Terreux and the aforementioned Offshoot Beer brands, prior to moving on to Figueroa Mountain Brewing.

Look for Radiant's first holiday beer release in December, a British-inspired dark strong ale, in cans



Katie Boddy (Tasting Room Manager)
Photo Courtesy of Radiant Beer Co.

and on draft. Sending Out Lite, Radiant's first light lager is also out right now (99 calories per 12oz serving), as well as Universal Handshake, a hazy triple IPA. An onsite art exhibit will run Dec 3-12 culminating with Art Fair & Makers Market on the 12th.

Radiant Beer Co.
1566 W Lincoln Ave, Anaheim

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

(Editor's note: A version of this feature ran online earlier this year. In light of Radiant's recent achievements, we were compelled to re-publish this updated article.)

COVER STORY

Passion, Process and Patience

URBAN ROOTS BREWING AND SMOKEHOUSE: 2021 BREWERY OF THE YEAR

by Daniel Drennon

At the California Craft Brewers Cup awards this Fall, unsurprisingly Urban Roots Brewing and Smokehouse was named “Brewery of the Year” for the state of California. Sadly, Beer Paper was still dormant due to the Damnmic. Otherwise, Urban Roots would have surely been our October cover story. Now that the paper has risen like the proverbial Phoenix, we interviewed Urban Roots brewmaster and co-founder Peter Hoey as our year-end cover story.

Urban Roots launched in Sacramento way, way back in May, 2018 to high expectations, as well as excitement and anticipation, since Hoey and co-founder Rob Archie were already respected, if not revered, in the wonderful world of craft beer.

Hoey, who doesn't look old enough to have spent nearly a quarter of a century honing his knowledge and skills, has evolved as a brewer the old-fashioned way. First, he got an education as a student, but later became a long-time teacher, at the American Brewers Guild. He climbed the ladder from being a shift brewer at some obscure place in Chico, Sierra Nevada, before accepting the head brewer gig at



DJ Quik and Peter Hoey doing a collaboration beer, Pitch In On A Party IPA
Photo Credit: Troy Cooper / Urban Roots

Bison Brewing in Berkeley. His next step was becoming the brewmaster at Sacramento Brewing Company before launching his first solo effort, Odanata Brewing, a contract brewing endeavor. When that didn't pan out (contract brewing is a tough road for many reasons), Hoey started consulting. That role translated into an offer to become Brewer Supply Group's (BSG) West Coast Regional Manager which he was for seven years.

Along the way, he met and became pals with his future Urban Roots co-founder Rob Archie. Archie is the owner of the critically-acclaimed Pangaea Bier Café in Sacramento, a super cool beer spot that features a fantastically eclectic beer menu and a phenomenal burger that has been named Best in Sacramento multiple times. The two hit it off and discovered they loved travelling the globe in search of world class beer and,

even more importantly, immersing themselves in what Hoey describes as “beer culture,” that unique camaraderie characterized by a strong sense of community and friends who share a love and respect for the art form of brewing great beer.

DRENNON: *Urban Roots has been what I call a “buzz brewery” and a beer industry darling since the day you opened. To what do you attribute that remarkable affection from patrons and industry peeps?*

HOEY: We are happy to have been well received from the start! I think the biggest contributor to that are the relationships that Rob Archie, my business partner, and I have built over our careers. People we look up to and people that inspire us were standing with us when we opened and I felt a huge responsibility to deliver the very best we possibly could to not let them or our guests down. We joke that the brewery was new but Rob and I weren't. Our goal was and is to contribute to beer culture in Sacramento and in California – to be part of what makes beer in this state special and that is one of our driving forces to this day.

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Urban Roots Brewery & Patio

Photo Credit: Troy Cooper / Urban Roots

DRENNON: Why did you guys choose the name Urban Roots and what does it mean to you?

HOEY: Making beer is a combination of agriculture and industrial production. All the ingredients are grown away from cities on farms but most breweries can be found in city centers. That combination of urban setting of an agriculturally based product led us to the name, Urban Roots. The city and the farm coming together to make beer.

DRENNON: I've heard and read how you incorporated your favorite elements of breweries from you and

Rob's travels, but please highlight the main ones for our readers.

HOEY: Rob and I traveled together going to beer events for nearly a decade before this project and fell in love with beer cultures all over the world. I was drawn to the biergardens of Germany, which is why we have the large front patio complete with chestnut trees. Rob loved the cafes of Belgium which influenced our bar area design. We both loved the comfort and community of an English pub which is why in the restaurant area we have the high-backed booths. Beer cultures are different all over the world but

the one constant is being a place to gather – whether it's standing at a bar, tucked into a booth, or taking in the beer garden on a sunny day. We loved all those elements and wanted to incorporate our favorite things into the design of the brewery to share with Sacramento and with visitors from all over.

DRENNON: Do you have a brewing philosophy and is that something that has evolved over your many years as a brewer?

HOEY: Curiosity and inspiration. I have always been curious and curiosity drives a lot of what I have learned and a lot of what we do at Urban Roots. Whether it is a new ingredient, or a new process, I want to dive into it and learn as much as I can and bring that back to the brewhouse. Inspiration plays a big role in that as well – tasting a new food can inspire a new beer, or having a remarkable experience on a trip fuels me to look at how our team can improve. Looking at what we can add to make the beer or experience better for our guests. Being open to change and continual improvement is important for the entire business. We are always trying to be better than you were yesterday. You never arrive at "great" - it is a process not a destination and letting that guide or decision making keeps the whole team working together on making great beer.

DRENNON: In any successful partnership, whether it be marriage or business, both individuals complement one another and bring certain advantages to the relationship. How do you and Rob complement one another and what are the strong suits for each of you?

HOEY: Rob has taught me so much over the years about hospitality and guest experience. It's something that

comes naturally to him that didn't to me. His ability to lead and coach has made me a better leader in the company. We still make decisions together for all business operations but knowing I have such a strong partner looking after hospitality frees me up to focus on brewery operations. I see brewers open their own businesses and frequently they are pulled into tasting room or restaurant management because that side of the business needs a lot of attention. It pulls them out of the brewery that got them into the business in the first place. It is intensely important to me that I remain involved in the brewing operations because that is where my heart is at and working with Rob allows me to do that with confidence that our hospitality won't suffer when the brewery is demanding my attention.

DRENNON: Having been a teacher at the American Brewers Guild for 13 years, do you believe a person can learn to become a great brewer? How much is natural talent and how much is education, application, process and work ethic?

HOEY: All of those things are important. Being able to thoughtfully impact your beer through a command of the brewing process is really what it's about. That takes experience, education, and making lots of mistakes to arrive at the thing that works. Building a tool box starts with education, then experience, and you continually add whatever is necessary in order to solve problems, create recipes, and make better and better beer as you grow as a brewer. Drive, ambition and curiosity play a major role in the growth of a brewer and ultimately learning and growing is what is going to help anyone make better beer.

(COVER STORY continued on page 10)

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(COVER STORY continued)

DRENNON: *To extrapolate that line of thinking from the quality of the brewer to the quality of the beer, what is the key to brewing great, or what I like to call “wow beer,” as opposed to the more common encounter with good or “just OK beer?”*

HOEY: I talk a lot about the small things, water chemistry, pH, recipe formulation, process. Every brewer has access to the same set of ingredients so it's how you combine them and the processes you use that makes your beer unique and hopefully great. It is all the small details that can elevate a beer from good to great. The other thing I think it requires is being realistically critical of your own beers and not being afraid to continually make small tweaks to fine tune flavors. Ingredients change from crop year to crop year so recipes can't be static. The other thing is editing what is released – no one wants to dump a batch but if what is in the tank isn't good then it shouldn't see the light of day. The pressure can be intense to release just ok beer especially for startups and the last two years of operational restrictions we all experienced. The damage a batch that isn't up to your standards going out into the world can do to your reputation is far more expensive than making the choice of dumping it.

DRENNON: *Where do you rank the importance of equipment, ingredients, original recipes and water quality? Or are they all inextricably linked and thus equally critical to brewing great beer?*

HOEY: If a brewer is brewing by taste and experience, brilliant beer can be made on rudimentary systems. And just ok beer can be made on state of the art automated brewhouses. It really is up to the brewery to craft something delicious given the constraints that they face, be it municipal water that isn't ideally suited for brewing, converted dairy equipment for a brewhouse, or whatever might not be an ideal situation. Making critical choices in recipe, process, fermentation can result in delicious beer in some of the most unusual brewing situations.

DRENNON: *I am hoping that the title to this cover story reveals your own recipe for becoming a world class brewer: Passion, process and patience. Have I gotten close to what might just be the Urban Roots mantra?*

HOEY: Pretty close! We love what we do, are passionate and process driven brewers. And patience comes in for many of our releases. Waiting until the beer is ready can be difficult. Brewing lager takes a long time. Barrel aged beer takes even longer. The temptation to rush an IPA through is real when you are up against cellar capacity and are risking running out of beer at the pub or shorting distributors. Time is an ingredient that we talk about often for our barrel aged beers, lagers, and even the quicker fermenting ales we produce.

DRENNON: *Having been born and raised in North Carolina, one of the handful of BBQ-crazy states in our*



Tomorrows Verse

country, I would be remiss to not ask about the “Smokehouse” component of Urban Roots Brewing and Smokehouse. In my humble opinion, your BBQ equals the world class stature of the beer, which is no mean feat. Why did you and Rob choose BBQ and what is the secret to great BBQ? (grinning) Any chance that is also has to do with passion, process and patience?

HOEY: We felt that BBQ would be great cuisine to pair our beers with and it comes back to community again. BBQ is one of those foods that brings

Photo Credit: Troy Cooper / Urban Roots

people together, whether in a backyard, at a smokehouse or in a park. It's another social component of what we built in Sacramento. You can feed lots of people really fast so it is great for groups and gatherings. And there is no secret, just like the beer, the biggest ingredient is time. We slow smoke overnight most of the meats for service the following day. The butcher's attention to detail on how the brisket is trimmed, when it is wrapped, how long it rests and how it is cut are all the little things that take it from good to great. There are a lot of parallels to

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John Tompkins pouring 10° Pilsner

Photo Credit: Troy Cooper / Urban Roots

our beer production philosophy there. And just like only being as good as your last beer, the smokehouse is only as good as its last brisket. Both facets of the business have to get up and do it again tomorrow and always strive to do it better than last time.

DRENNON: *Well, Peter. Congratulations on being named Brewery of the Year. I strongly recommend that Angelenos take advantage of a short, inexpensive flight up to our state capital to visit your gorgeous and now award-winning brewery. I know I've been spoiled to be able to drink Urban Roots on draft at Bottlecraft in Long Beach as well as at Beachwood and Green Cheek for the wonderful collab beers you did with Julian and Evan respectively. Who distributes your beer in the greater Los Angeles region and where can readers find out which area beer bars are lucky enough to carry your damn delicious beers?*

HOEY: Our beers are distributed in Los Angeles by Lime Ventures. Best way to find out where to buy the beer would be keeping an eye on your favorite pub or bottle shops' social media. We don't maintain a

list because so many accounts these days rotate beers in and out and we are sometimes out of stock if we can't keep up with demand but you can always ask your favorite spot to bring in our beer.

DRENNON: *Speaking of collaborations, I'm sure Urban Roots is in high demand and receives more requests than you can accommodate. How do you go about choosing with whom to collab and what do you see as the value?*

HOEY: For us it is about inspiration and learning together. Often, they come about while hanging out or traveling with another brewer and we just get talking about something we are working on. What are we going to learn from the other brewery and what will they learn from us? Will we create something that is outside our comfort zone or typical style? Or will we learn (or share) a new technique that helps both brewers? It's about growth and relationships.

DRENNON: *Finally, if you had to describe yourself in one word or phrase, would it be?*

HOEY: Curious.

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Wicks Brewing

INNOVATION YOU CAN TASTE IN EVERY GLASS

by Andrew Smith

“Sometimes I taste a beer, and think wow, it tastes like these guys had fun making it,” says Ryan Wicks. “When you have passion that goes into everything you’re doing, you can taste it in the glass. It goes beyond the ingredients.” It’s an attitude Wicks brings to the brewhouse every day.

Wicks Brewing has grown dramatically since opening in 2013, gaining even greater impetus amidst the past couple of challenging years. It’s part of a commitment to innovation, excellence, and fun. Their hazies and West Coast IPAs are among the best in Southern California, and they’re constantly collaborating, challenging themselves, and driving forward.

Ryan Wicks opened the brewery with his father. It was his father’s “retirement” plan from his restaurant construction company. His father did retire shortly thereafter, and Ryan has since been the sole steward of the business. The story dates back several years earlier. While still in construction, Ryan and his father had a homebrew setup in the office. That sparked them to open a homebrew and hydroponics store. The brewery was later built in the adjoining unit.

The brewery was remarkably different to what we see today. There was the brewpub and kitchen from the outset. But the greater emphasis had been on brew-on-premise (BOP), where novices could brew and bottle their own beers. Initially, Ryan oversaw the administrative side of the business and the BOP program.

“The brewery was more of a secondary project to the brew-on-premise,” Wicks explains, “As more people started coming to drink our beer, rather than brew their own, the production side took more of our time and focus.” The BOP program ended in 2016 and the taproom was expanded.

Ryan’s role changed too, taking over as head brewer in 2019. “A lot of brewers start on the brew deck then end up being stuck in an office. I went the opposite direction,” says Wicks, “We have great people in place, so that I don’t have to worry about the accounting, the kitchen, the restaurant. I get to do all the fun stuff and don’t have to do the boring stuff.”

“We’ve had some very talented brewers over the years,” adds Wicks, “I was able to learn different things from each of them. It was like I’d been brewing commercially for years, absorbing all that knowledge from guys who’d worked at some of the best breweries in the world.”



Ryan Wicks on the Brew Deck

Photo Credit: Andrew Smith

Having homebrewed for many years, run the BOP program, and shadowed several head brewers, the leap to the brew deck was a fairly natural transition. Wicks’ additional backgrounds in hydroponics, restaurant construction, and an education in mechanical engineering have been central to the brewery’s efficiency, forward thinking, and innovation.

“I’m part engineer, part chemist, part artist,” he jokes, “I have that mindset when it comes to fixing things. I’m constantly tinkering with the brewhouse, finding the most functional way.” It’s helped the process keep pace with changing techniques, like configuring his whirlpool to get amazing results out of his hazies. “Technology is constantly lagging behind newer trends and styles,” he explains, “The engineering side of me is always trying to find ways to make the equipment meet the creativity.”

Wicks enjoys the idea of being the owner/brewer, one he has no intention of relinquishing. “When you’re focusing on the ledger and less on the creative side, you’re always asking: Do we really need that?” he elaborates, “Now I don’t have to justify it. If it’s going to make better beer, we’re going to do it.”

“I thoroughly enjoy being on the brew deck,” he continues, “Being able to see things through from start to finish, take the creative direction, it’s a dream job. I want to make the best possible beer, not just locally, I want my beer to stand with the best. Let’s not just be another good brewery. Let’s be an excellent one!”

That emphasis runs through every beer. “We try and do something special with each one,” he adds, “Not just meet the guidelines but make it unique and



Val King, Wicks Brewing General Manager, serving customers

Photo Credit: Andrew Smith

intriguing, make it our own. We want to bring something different instead of making the same shit everyone else is making.” The Siesta Mexican lager is a prime example. He went “new school” on the hops to achieve a hint of traditional lime flavor. The addition of Centennial and Lemon drop to the whirlpool offer that subtle kiss of bright, fresh citrus. It’s an excellent take on a style I’d rarely rave about.

That innovative mentality goes into the flagship Best Coast IPA. It’s an evolving recipe and a shining example of everything that’s great about the West Coast style, grapefruit and crisp citrus, as well as a touch of tropical hop oils.

“We’re constantly looking at ways of improving it,” explains Wicks, “How to get a better expression of the hops

or the aromas. We’ll take things we learned from doing a hazy or dry-hopping a pilsner and incorporate them into the next batch.” The general consensus around the taproom is that every batch of Best Coast is the best Best Coast they’ve made.

Best Coast, Siesta, and the award-winning Paladin Pale Ale and Bard’s Song Pecan Brown make up the core. But Wicks dabbles in everything. You’ll find up to 20 house taps at the brewery, styles varying by season but running the full range from pilsners to sours, saisons, and imperial stouts. “We definitely focus on drinkability,” adds Wicks, “But we also like to play around. Every week we’re throwing in a new recipe.”

They’re also running a new collaboration every month. “I’m

good friends with a lot of brewers and it’s fun to pick their brains and experience,” adds Wicks, “You learn something from all of them. That’s the greatest strength in our community: All of us working together to better our craft.”

That sense of community has established Wicks as a unifying figure in the IE. He’s been heavily

involved with the Inland Empire Brewers Guild and CCBA in recent years. (Post interview, he was elected IEBG president in November). During Covid, he coordinated the IE’s mixed brewery packs that were shipped across the state during California Craft Beer Week. He extended credit to his accounts during the dog days

(INLAND EMPIRE continued on page 14)



Wicks beer lineup

Photo Credit: Andrew Smith



Kat Gresco, assistant brewer, with Ryan

Photo Credit: Andrew Smith



Ryan and Chad Adams of GreyWolf

Photo Credit: Andrew Smith



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(INLAND EMPIRE continued)

of the pandemic. More recently, at the brewery, I got to taste a fantastic dry-hopped pilsner he brewed as part of the #Brewstachestrong campaign, generating funds for brain cancer research.

Having thrived primarily in its own neighborhood, demand and capability are pushing Wicks further. Quickly outgrowing the brewpub model, they've expanded further in the past year, 250% over pre-Covid levels. Starting from four 7-barrel fermenters, they've added nine larger fermenters. "One of those 30-barrel fermenters can hold more than my whole cellar did in the early years," Wicks jokes, "Now I can use those 7's for splitting, mixing, and extended aging on my saisons and fun beers."

Growth has focused almost entirely on infrastructure and perfecting the process. That improvement means they'll be looking further afield in 2022 with dedicated distribution to

Los Angeles and Orange County. As a central IE figure, he may be taking a few local friends along for the ride.

The mindset, intelligence, and passion shine through at Wicks Brewing. Ryan sums it up more succinctly: "We're really just focused on having fun." I've ribbed Ryan several times about his social media selfies. But you'll notice those selfies are on the brew deck or next a new tank that just got delivered. It's a passion for the process that permeates the flavor in the glass.

"I look forward to coming to work every day," Ryan adds, "Even if it goes to shit, there's always a cold beer waiting. I couldn't imagine doing anything else."

Andrew Smith grew up in England and 'thought' he knew everything about beer before he landed on the California craft boom. He covers the Inland Empire more extensively on his blog at CraftBeerIE.com

BOOK REVIEW

The Seal of Silence Gets Broken

by Sean Inman

Archival Silence sounds like a title for a James Bond movie or a Dan Brown novel but it is actually the main takeaway from reading *A Woman's Place is in the Brewhouse* by Tara Nurin. Subtitled, *A forgotten history of alewives, brewsters, witches, and CEOs*.

Archival silence meaning the systematic and insidious scrubbing of women from history overall which means many women are missing from beer history as well.

Nurin, who has written about craft beer for years, most notably for *Forbes*, has delved into history and found a surprising number of women who, up until now, had been forgotten. Women who not only were not written about, but in most cases, were not even spoken to at all.

Each chapter illuminates women from Teri Fahrendorf, a brewer and founder of the Pink Boots Society, a group that is home to women in the beverage industry as well as its own hop blend that you see in IPAs to Peace Onwuchekwa, a brewer and quality control supervisor at Bature Brewery in Nigeria, who is blazing a trail in Africa.

For me, reading about Sister Doris Engelhard, the nun who is still brewing in Germany in her 70's was just amazing and then learning the name Mary Lisle, "the first woman on record to own a commercial brewery" in the United States was another eye opener. I have a vast stack of beer books and yet I had never heard of either of them or, for that matter, many of the women noted in the pages of this book.

The book is formatted with a chapter set in modern craft beer times and then the next goes way back

into history. Two parallel historical tracks that you follow to the end of the book where they connect. Combined with short, punchy chapters, it really propels the reader through time.

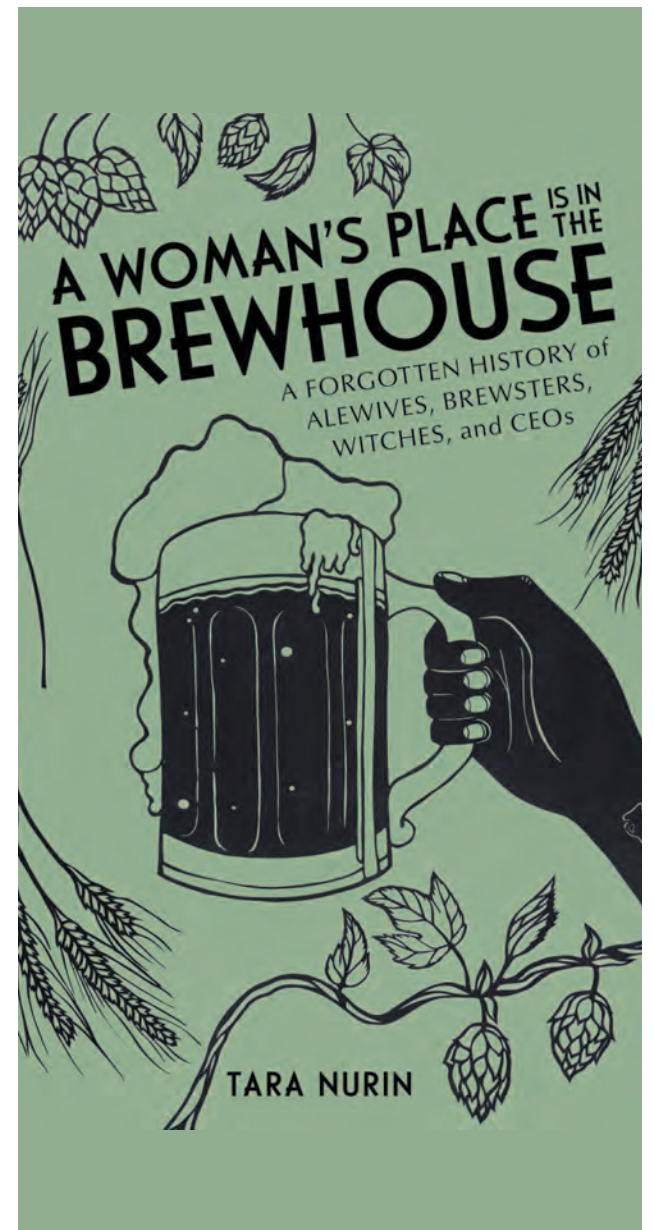
The only place where I felt quizzical was when Nurin wrote about Carry Nation and the lead-up to prohibition. It was a little too forgiving of Nation to my eyes as I find most of the "drys" of that era were too dogmatic and single-focused. That being said, I appreciated that the view on that time was from a different angle.

What really sold me on this book though were the closing chapters. Nurin sticks the landing by not overstating or underselling gains made by women in the brewing industry and by ably pointing out what still needs to be done, the work still unfinished. Most of which needs to be done by men.

The research involved to create this staggers the mind since so much of the records are blank and this was being done, partially, during lockdown. You want to read more about these women but a lot of it is just not there. But I have a hunch that this book could serve as a launching pad for other books as writers see a story that can spin off in a new direction.

The seal of silence has been broken and everyone who is a fan of beer throughout history will want to pick up this book because you will meet some amazing people in these pages.

Sean Inman has been writing about beer since 2009 on his blog, Beer Search Party. He also was the beer editor for Food GPS.



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