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GAMER + BREWER = GAMECRAFT



Andrew Moy (Head Brewer) and Mike Ewoltdt (Assistant Brewer)

Photo Credit: Matthew Garcia @momentsinbeer

by Daniel Drennon

A gamer is one who enjoys playing games, notably video games, or can be one who consistently gives a strong effort in the most challenging of

times, notably in the sports world but could apply to school, business or... brewing. Certainly, the "Damnemic," as I like to call it, has provided the most challenging of times for

small business owner and brewers. And, side note, could there finally be light at the end of this two-year tunnel from Hell?

Andrew Moy is the co-founder and Head Brewer

for GameCraft located in Laguna Hills. A rising star among a virtual sea of world class brewers in our super-loaded SoCal brewing scene, Moy won 2019 GABF Gold for There is No Cow Level,

his wonderful coffee stout, and followed up a year later with a Bronze medal for Umbeereon, his German Dark Lager.

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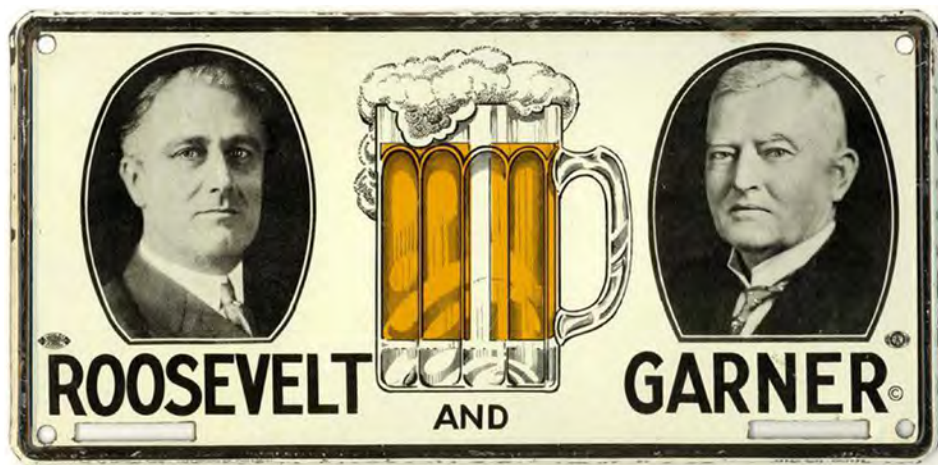


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TO LIVE & DRINK IN LA

ROOSEVELT'S BREW DEAL LA GOT OVER ITS 'DRY' SPELL 89 YEARS AGO

by Tomm Carroll



Roosevelt License Plate, 1932

Photo Courtesy of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum

"I think this would be a good time for a beer."

While this sounds like an appropriate declaration to make right now, as pandemic restrictions continue to lift and Southern California breweries and taprooms return to normal operations, it's actually a quote from our 32nd President of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Spoken on March 22, 1933, less than three weeks after his inauguration, FDR made good on his campaign pledge to repeal Prohibition as he signed into law that day the Cullen-Harrison Act (also known as the Beer-Wine Revenue Act), which was the first step toward fulfilling that promise. The law legalized, and taxed, beverages containing no more than 3.2% alcohol by weight (4.0% by volume), which the authors of the new bill were careful to define as "non-intoxicating"; these beverages were previously illegal for consumption in the US since the Volstead Act (aka the 18th Amendment) became law as of January 17, 1920. Under Prohibition, only beverages with 0.5% abv (0.4% abw) alcohol were allowed without a prescription.

(Why Volstead measured in abv, while Cullen-Harrison used abw has never been explained...maybe because abw sounds lower?)

The Cullen-Harrison Act required that states had to pass their own similar

legislation to legalize sale of low-alcohol beverages within their borders, and for those that did, the new law took effect April 7, 1933. Nineteen states had passed such laws, California among them. Eight months later, on December 5, 1933, the Volstead Act was repealed by the 21st Amendment, legalizing full-strength alcohol. This date is known as Repeal Day.

But since 2009, April 7 has been celebrated as National Beer Day in the US, thanks to Justin Smith, a beer aficionado in Virginia, who started a Facebook page to commemorate it. The Untappd app then created a badge for National Beer Day and it began to catch on through social media. In 2017, National Beer Day was officially recognized in the Congressional Record.

As we commemorate this deserved hop-fueled holiday in SoCal in 2022, let's take a look back at how Los Angeles breweries dealt with the liberating date 89 years ago, when, like today, a long, national nightmare was coming to an end...

When Prohibition took effect in early 1920, not long after the end of World War I, during the final throes of the H1N1 virus pandemic (aka "Spanish Flu"), and less than a decade before the Great Depression (talk about a string of bad luck!), the city of Los Angeles, with a population of some 570,000, only had three breweries in operation:

Maier Brewing, Mathie Brewing and Los Angeles Brewing.

The **Maier Brewery**, located at 95 Aliso Street (now an on-ramp for the 101 Freeway) was previously the Maier & Zobelein Brewery (1882-1907) and before that the Philadelphia Brewery (1874-1882), and originally the El Aliso Winery (1831-1862). It was LA's oldest existing brewery at the time. Joseph Maier, the namesake co-founder, died of heart disease at 53 in 1905 and left his share of the business to his sons, Fred, who became president, and Edward Maier.

The **Mathie Brewery**, located at 1850 North Main Street (currently the site of a UPS Customer Center) was originally the Ferdinand A. Heim Brewery, founded in 1901 by, and named for, the nephew and heir to the



1933 Legal Beer Cartoon
Courtesy of SlidePlayer.com

late Ferdinand Heim, Sr., a brewing magnate from Kansas City. The younger Heim originally ran a bottling and distribution business on Ramirez Street. In 1903, Heim sold the brewery to Edward Mathie, who enlarged the facility and began operating in 1905. It was located literally across the street

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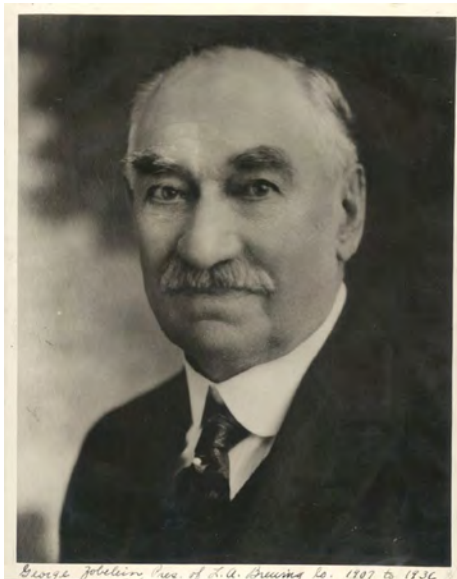
(Moulton Avenue) from Mathie’s previous place of employment...

...the **Los Angeles Brewery**, which he co-founded with P. Max Kuehnrich in 1897 at 1920 North Main Street (now the Brewery Arts Colony in Lincoln Heights). Kuehnrich was president and general manager, with Mathie serving as vice president and superintendent. In 1902, a dispute between the principals over the financial mismanagement of the company resulted in Mathie trying to have Kuehnrich ousted, but the board of directors sided with the president, and Mathie himself was removed from the organization. The following year, he purchased the nearby Heim brewery.

Another clash of owners erupted back on Aliso Street in 1907 when George Zobelein, who owned half of the brewery, discovered that his recently deceased partner’s sons wound up with a majority share of company stock, despite the fact that Maier and Zobelein had been equal partners. He filed a lawsuit, which was appealed to the Supreme Court. A settlement was eventually reached and the Maier brothers bought Zobelein out for “an amount which is placed at nearly \$800,000,” according to *American Brewers’ Review*, Vol. 21 (1907).

With his settlement, he purchased the Los Angeles Brewery from Kuehnrich that year. Zobelien named his newly brewed portfolio of beers “Eastside,” as the brewery was located East of the LA River.

As Prohibition Grew Near, So Did



George Zobelein
Photo Courtesy of CemeteryGuide.com

the Beer

With the dawn of Prohibition looming closer on the horizon, no brewery owner was happy, obviously. On January 17, 1919 (exactly one year before the Volstead act would take effect), the *Los Angeles Herald* published an article gaging reactions of Angelenos to the imminent “Dry LA.” “This means the most terrible disaster for business,” brewery owner Mathie told the reporter. “In securing prohibition, the reformers have put thousands of people out of work, and ruined millions of dollars’ worth of business. In Los Angeles alone, about \$2 million is affected just in the breweries. It is plain calamity.”

When the country did go “dry,” at least officially, most breweries in the nation transitioned into producing root beer and soft drinks, fruit juices, unfermented apple cider, even ice

cream, as well as the legal 0.5% abv “near beer,” all to varying degrees of success, to stay in business. Some also made denatured alcohol.

Los Angeles Brewing, which also went by the name of Zesto Beverage Co. during the “dry” years, additionally would make regular Eastside beer, but removed the alcohol, provided that alcohol to industrial companies making paint or dye. Alcohol was also sold to the medical market (hospitals, doctors, dentists, drug stores) under the name Tru-Grain. The sale of these products enabled the brewery to keep pace with pre-Prohibition sales, according to the “Zobelein Family History,” compiled by Guilli Zobelein on *Zobelein.com*, which also claims that prior to 1920, Los Angeles Brewing Company was the fifth largest beer producer in the US. Not surprisingly, the brewery survived Prohibition intact.

Several US breweries, however, felt they could not, or did not want to, exist producing only near beer or the other sanctioned alternatives, and out of desperation, or defiance, continued to brew full-strength beer illegally, to surreptitiously supply the growing number of “speakeasies” — hidden, secret saloons that served liquor. (In fact, it has been said that at one point during Prohibition, there were more speakeasies in LA than there had been saloons before 1920!)

While some Volstead-violators undoubtedly got away with it, one such brewery that did not was **Maier Brewing**. On March 30, 1932 (ironically, just over a year before

the production and sale of 4.0% abv beer was made legal), “a spectacular raid was staged by ten Prohibition agents on the plant of Maier Brewing Company,” reported the May 1932 issue of the journal *The American Brewer*. “The brewery and bottling plant, and all of their contents, valued at \$3 million, were seized...” and the sales manager and another employee were arrested. “This is the first instance where a brewery operating under Government permit to make near beer has been padlocked on the Pacific Coast,” the article added.

Despite the denial of any knowledge of the illicit brew, then-president Edward Maier (as his brother Fred had died in 1909), the Feds claimed they had discovered “unshakable evidence” of the violation, according to “From

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Edward R. Maier
Photo Courtesy of CemeteryGuide.com

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Eastside Lager to Maier's Select Malt Tonic: A Brief History of LA Beer," a 2011 article by Nathan Masters on KCET.org.

Another blurb in the same issue of *The American Brewer* reported that the Maier bottling plant "had just been leased by owner Edward Maier to parties who were to enter into an extensive sales program for selling Cereal Beverages [Prohibition-era euphemism for near beer]."

The brewery reopened in May 1932 under a \$10,000 federal bond, with its operations limited to "the movement of manufactured [legal] product on hand," the July issue of *The American Brewer* wrote, also revealing that petitions in involuntary bankruptcy were filed in mid-June against Maier and his company. In June, Maier Brewing was forced into bankruptcy by creditors and put into a court-appointed receivership, but did not resume brewing until after Prohibition was repealed.

It wasn't until 1940 that Maier finally regained control of his brewery in a court settlement — seven years after



Postcard of Los Angeles Brewery, early 1900s, after purchase by George Zobelein
Courtesy of skyscraperpage.com

Prohibition ended. But tragically, he perished in a house fire three years later. Although it was never again family-owned, Maier Brewing eventually regained its status as one of LA's biggest breweries over the years, and was responsible for the (in) famous Brew 102 in the 1950s. The company existed into the early 1970s before being bought by a company that owned Falstaff Brewing, being renamed General Brewing, and then fading away.

Confirming the aforementioned fears of its owner, as quoted in the *Los Angeles Herald*, Mathie Brewing was out of the brewing business even before January 17, 1920, when Prohibition took effect. That month, advertisements began appearing in the *Herald* hawking apple cider from Watsonville, California for delivery, and recommending "Serve Cider — the 1920 Beverage — for Health." The cider was "stored in glass enamel-lined steel tanks" — the same ones Mathie

had bragged about installing in articles and ads when he built out his brewery. The ads were for "Atlas Beverage Co. (formerly Mathie Brewery)," apparently a bottling plant and local distributor.

On June 23, the *Herald* ran an article announcing that one of the warehouses at the brewery would be used for preserving and dehydrating fruits and vegetables, as well as making by-products from them.

Then, in the February 18, 1921 edition of the *San Pedro Daily News*, an article announced that Mathie and his company's board of directors had decided that "the plant should be sold for the best possible price and at the earliest opportunity." The newspaper added, "When Mr. Mathie was first asked [before the Volstead Act went into effect] what was to be done with the plant, he said he guessed he'd dedicate it to the prohibition element of the country..." Hence, the soft cider company.

By late March, the brewery was sold to the Imperial Cotton Mills Company of Los Angeles, to be converted into a 20,000-spindle textile mill. That spring, Mathie was selling those

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Zesto beverage label during Prohibition
Courtesy of Richard Foss

glass enamel-lined steel tanks, the brewhouse, bottling line and other equipment in *Herald* classified ads, and in October, harvest season, classified ads ran to sell the brewery's trucks for hauling grapes.

The Mathie Brewing property did become a brewery once again, however — after Repeal. San Diego's Balboa Brewery purchased the facility as its second location in 1934, according to a 2018 article in *West Coaster* by Sheldon Kaplan entitled "A Look Back: San Diego Beer History from 1868 to 1953." It then changed its name to Monarch Brewing in 1936, but went out of business in 1942.

Mathie himself eventually returned to brewing as well. In the November 1935 issue of *The American Brewer*, it was announced that he had become the brewmaster at Lynwood Brewery in Los Angeles County.

Last Brewery Standing

The only LA brewery still in operation come April 7, 1933, Zobelein's Los Angeles Brewing retired the Zesto Beverage name, and now was also known as **Eastside Brewing**. The whole state of California had only six breweries that were capable of producing "non-intoxicating" 4.0% abv beer by that date: three in San Francisco, one in Oakland, one in Stockton, and Eastside in LA. Part of the reason was that the government gave breweries just over two weeks notice of the date that real beer would be no longer be illegal.

But Zobelein was in good shape, and ready to restart his old business immediately. Because Eastside was already brewing regular beer, only removing the alcohol, all that was



Eastside beverage label during Prohibition
Courtesy of Richard Foss

required was to bypass the denaturing process. According to *Zobelein.com*, as well as a March 2005 article on *RustyCans.com*, a beer can collecting website, "Numerous trucks were parked at the brewery, loaded and ready to go as the day approached when legal beer could be shipped... [E]ach truck was filled with bottles and barrels of beer, and then, accompanied by two treasury agents, moved to its parking spot to await 12:01 a.m. April 7, 1933."

And then, this being Hollywood, Zobelein did it in style. One minute after the stroke of midnight, actor Walter Huston said a few words and "blonde bombshell" actress Jean Harlow broke a bottle of Eastside beer over the first truck in line, christening the Los Angeles Brewery's rebirth. The trucks started rolling out of the gates, most with an armed guard riding along, to deliver legal beer to bars in LA and beyond.

"When the night was done, one executive for the brewery reported they had a stack of money 18 inches high, and when they counted all the night's receipts they found they had taken in over one quarter of a million dollars for their beer," according to *RustyCans.com*, adding, "Things were so chaotic that they got payments for beer they didn't even remember selling. Of course, the fact that Harlow [a heavy drinker], stuck around partying with the brewery employees probably didn't help!"

Zobelein was doing his best to quench the thirst of LA, and the region. City population was about 1.3 million — more than twice what it was when Prohibition began. But with Los

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Jean Harlow christens the rebirth of Los Angeles Brewery with a bottle of Eastside beer
Courtesy of the Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection

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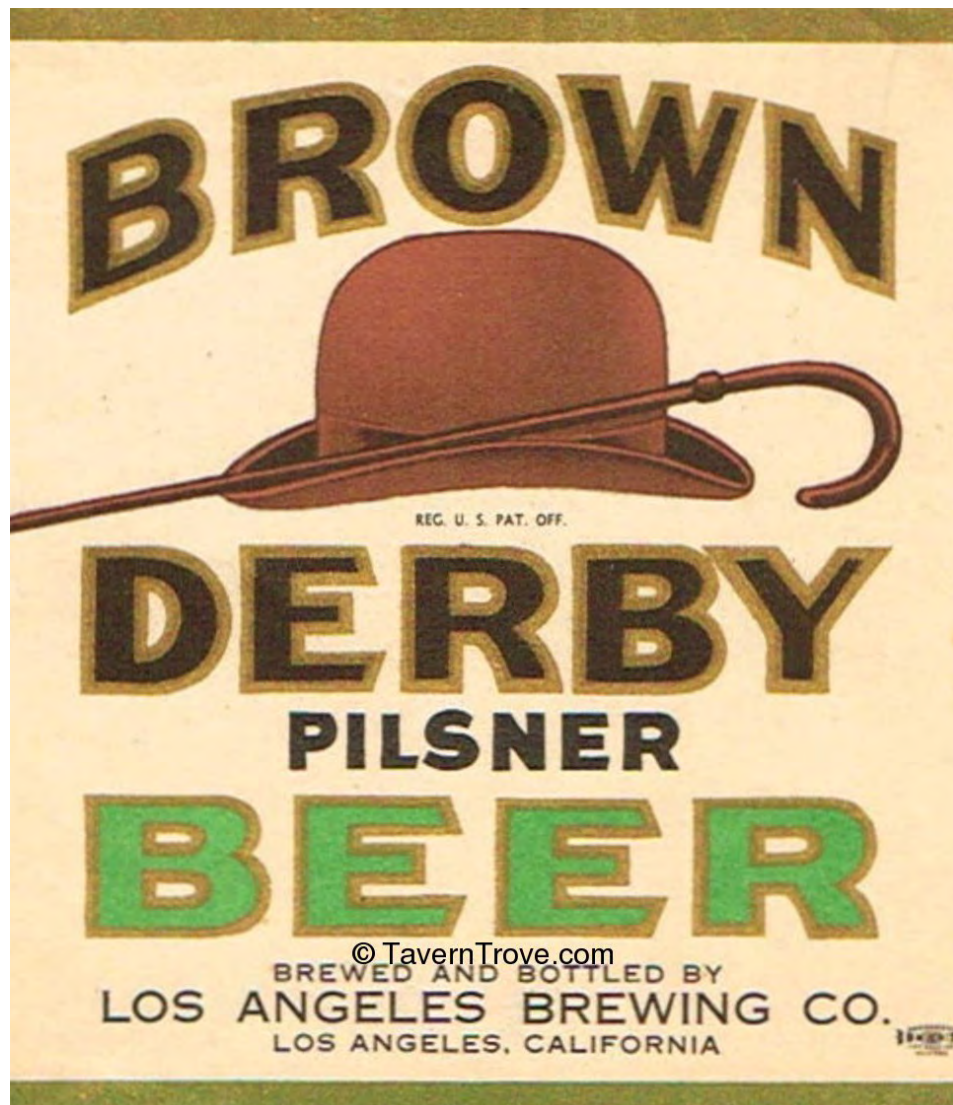
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Brown Derby Beer label, Los Angeles Brewing, 1937

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Maier Brewery

Courtesy of LA Herald

(TO LIVE & DRINK IN LA continued)

Angeles down to a single brewery, there were not enough suds to go around in the months between April and December 1933, when Prohibition was completely repealed, so Eastside had its work cut out for it.

Under the headline “Shortage of Beer in Los Angeles,” the June 1933 issue of *The American Brewer* reported: “An acute shortage of beer is being experienced at Los Angeles, where but one brewery is in operation. Retailers there are willing to pay as high as \$6 a case for beer that sells in San Francisco for \$2.40. Out of the State brewers are finding the Los Angeles field a splendid market and beer is coming in from Mexico, Japan and Canada, as well as from Europe, despite the high duty.”

Los Angeles/Eastside Brewery continued successfully through the 1930s, producing Eastside Lager Beer (which remained its best seller), Eastside Ale, Eastside Bock and Luxury Extra Dry Pilsner, among others, including Brown Derby Beer (named for the LA landmark restaurant) for Safeway stores.

Ultimately, Eastside was bought by Milwaukee’s Pabst Brewing — the first of the big breweries to expand to the West Coast — in 1948, but continued to operate as a separate company until 1953, when Pabst built a new brewery next door to produce its own beer. The Eastside Lager was still brewed, but became a low-priced discount beer, and renamed Eastside Old Tap — which, appropriately, was sold at Dodger Stadium on its opening day in 1962.

Pabst continued brewing in Los Angeles until 1979, when it closed the facility and sold off the property. Fortunately, some of the structures of the original Los Angeles Brewery remain and, as previously mentioned, is now the Brewery Arts Complex, known mostly as just “The Brewery.”

Fittingly, carrying on the beer legacy of that property in recent years was the restaurant and expertly curated beer bar, Barbara’s at the Brewery. Unfortunately, Barbara’s had to close in December 2020, but there remains the possibility that it will return, or else hopefully be succeeded by a similar themed beer bar/restaurant or pub.

Celebrate National Beer Day!

So pay homage to LA’s brewing history this year on Thursday, April 7, by visiting one of SoCal’s many craft breweries to raise a toast to National Beer Day. Make the celebration more appropriate by drinking one of the new Eastside brand beers that Angel City Brewing has revived and produced. Currently available on draught and in cans are the Eastside Bock and the Eastside California Common.

And for the ultimate in authenticity, drink one at 12:01 am on April 7! Prost!

(Editor’s Note: A version of this story originally appeared on *BeerPaperLA.com* in April 2021.)

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

PINK BOOTS MARCH FORWARD

by David Mulvihill

Pink Boots Society Collaboration Brew Days typically take place every year on and around International Women's Day (March 8). Pink Boots Society members come together at breweries around the world to support, encourage, bring awareness to and raise funds for women to advance their careers in the brewing industry. A portion of the proceeds from sales of the resulting collaboration beers goes to fund educational scholarships for Pink Boots Society members. Yakima Chief Hops, in collaboration with Pink Boots Society members, produces the annual Pink Boots Hop Blend utilized in the many variations of brews taking place. In turn, it also donates a portion of the hop blend sales (\$3/lb.) to support Pink Boots scholarships. This year's goal is to sell 50,000 lbs. and facilitate 500 unique brew days.

The 2022 Blend: Idaho Gem (berry, bubblegum, citrus, floral, mint), HBC 630 (citrus, stone fruit, sweet aromatic, tropical), Talus (grapefruit, herbal, pine, rose, tropical), Triumph (bubblegum, citrus, herbal, tropical), Loral (citrus, floral, herbal, lemon, tropical)

Note: While Collaboration Brew Day may be focused around March 8, Pink Boots Society and its members are quick to point out that a brew day may happen any day throughout the year. It's never too late to support Pink Boots. Breweries can support by hosting a Pink Boots Brew. Beer drinkers can support by drinking the beer. If you see Pink Boots beers on a pub or brewery tap list, try them.

This year, March 8 fell within the same week that World Beer Cup entries were required to be packaged and sent for the competition taking place in early May at the Craft Brewers Conference in Minneapolis. This was a contributing reason for collaboration brews taking place before and after.

Some of the Brews

In Orange County, Riip Beer Co (Huntington Beach) had its PBCD on March 15. GameCraft Brewing (Laguna Hills) will be brewing its Pink



Pink Boots Society Members at Pizza Port Bressi Ranch

Photo Credit: MJ Doddridge

Boots beer in April.

I met with the very active OC Pink Boots, Mary Jane (MJ) Doddridge, in early March to discuss Pink Boots Collabs and the brews she had been and would be involved with. MJ multitasks in her various roles as a GameCraft Brewing team member, OC Pink Boots Society chapter member, and active advocate for the Orange County Brewers Guild.

Some weeks prior to March 8, San Diego's White Labs hosted the OC and San Diego Pink Boots Society chapters for a day of brewing its Hazy Pale Ale collab, which was released on March 8. The White Labs/OC connection comes via OC Pink Boots Co-Chapter Leader, Demetria Dorame, who also works at White Labs. Deme lives in OC, commuting part time to White Labs as its Education Ambassador and tasting room team member. Dana

Martindale is the other OC Co-Chapter Leader.

March 8 was a very busy day for MJ and some OC members. The day began with a drive south from Orange County to Carlsbad for the Pink Boots Brew happening at Pizza Port Bressi Ranch, a pale ale incorporating the YCH hop blend. Pizza Port brewer Haven Lerman assisted in directing the Bressi brew. Haven was formerly Jon Eckelberger's assistant brewer at Pizza

Port San Clemente before joining the crew in Carlsbad.

From Carlsbad, a trek north to Torrance took place for Monkish Brewing's PBCBD. Monkish brewer Annie Engel didn't let an arm injury postpone the planned March 8 brew day. With pink cast accompanying her pink boots, they brewed a Triple IPA. Annie joined OC Pink Boots chapter after relocating from the East Coast and accepting a position with The Bruery.

Additional Brews

In addition to the aforementioned White Labs brew released on March 8, Second Chance Beer Co (Carmel Mountain, San Diego) released its Second Chance Velvet Boots Pink Guava Sour. Thr3e Punk Ales (Chula Vista) released its Pink Boots Brew as well.

The above brews represent just a few of the many PBCBDs taking place in Southern California. A current map of all participating brewers can be found here:

<https://www.pinkbootsociety.org/pink-boots-brew2022/>

History

The idea for what began as International Women's Collaboration Brew Day (IWCBD) came from the UK's Sophie De Ronde, head brewer at Burnt Mill Brewery in Suffolk. She and other members of Project Venus (a UK based female brewers association) would regularly get together for collaboration brews. With the help of the U.S. based Pink Boots Society, the idea of taking these collaborative efforts globally, as a way of promoting and building relations between women in the brewing industry, became a reality. International Women's Day (March 8) was decided upon as the logical date to mark the event, first held in 2014.

Since that time it has morphed into Pink Boots Collaboration Brew Day (PBCBD).

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.



Monkish brewer and Pink Boots Society member Annie Engel
Photo Credit: MJ Doddridge



Dana Martindale, Mary Jane Doddridge, Demetria Dorame, and Mary Kay Cozensa
Photo Credit: MJ Doddridge



Unidentified, Pizza Port brewer Haven Lerman, MJ Doddridge (GameCraft)
Photo Credit: MJ Doddridge

COVER STORY

GAMER + BREWER = GAMECRAFT

by Daniel Drennon

A gamer is one who enjoys playing games, notably video games, or can be one who consistently gives a strong effort in the most challenging of times, notably in the sports world but could apply to school, business or...brewing. Certainly, the "Damnemic," as I like to call it, has provided the most challenging of times for small business owner and brewers. And, side note, could there finally be light at the end of this two-year tunnel from Hell?

Andrew Moy is the co-founder and Head Brewer for GameCraft located in Laguna Hills. A rising star among a virtual sea of world class brewers in our super-loaded SoCal brewing scene, Moy won 2019 GABF Gold for There is No Cow Level, his wonderful coffee stout, and followed up a year later with a Bronze medal for Umbeereon, his German Dark Lager.

Before even attending Siebel and

Doemens for brewing school, and while Head Brewer at Riip Beer, he had garnered a 2016 GABF Silver for Super Cali in the crazy competitive American IPA category.

DRENNON: *Where were you born and raised and what role did that play in your early development?*

MOY: I was born and raised in Long Beach and went to UCI for college, so I've been in SoCal for my entire life, for beer I had some pretty good local options. One of the places that really got me into craft beer was Beachwood BBQ in Seal Beach. They really opened up my eyes to a lot of great craft beer that is out there.

DRENNON: *What did you think you wanted to do for a profession before you became a brewer?*

MOY: I had a lot of interest in the



Andrew Moy (Head Brewer) and Mike Ewoldt (Assistant Brewer)
Photo Credit: Matthew Garcia @momentsinbeer

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medical field and with a B.S. Degree in Public Health I was looking at something epidemiology related. Alternatively, I was looking at becoming a Paramedic with a fire department or joining the military as a corpsman.

DRENNON: *When and how did you get into brewing?*

MOY: My parents got me a homebrew kit for Christmas in 2012 and I started really diving into it. After homebrewing for a little bit, I decided to get a job at a brewery temporarily while I looked to get a job in Public Health. After a while working at Bayhawk Ales in Irvine, I fell in love with the industry and stuck with it.

DRENNON: *Which brewers and/or which beers have influenced you?*

MOY: Blackwell from Belmont Brewing Co. and his pale ale have been my biggest influences. Blackwell not only helped me get my start in the industry, but I learned a lot of really

great fundamentals from working there with him. My brewing philosophies and styles really evolved from working there, a lot of which I continue today. Blackwell's super sessionable pale ale in particular is a great example of how the simplicity of a recipe can sometimes be better for the beer.

DRENNON: *We walk to Belmont Brewing Company in Long Beach and I love me some Blackwell, a local legend to be sure. From BBC, you moved onto another of our local faves, Riip Beer in nearby Huntington Beach. What did you learn during your time at Riip and why did you choose to leave?*

MOY: I learned a ton at Riip, especially the trials and tribulations of opening a new nano brewery. It was my first role as a head brewer; being responsible for all of the production, I had to learn a lot of new things operationally to keep the brewery running. As a brewer, I got the opportunity to really play around

with a lot of ingredients and dial in my IPAs, which we were mainly making there. I ended up leaving RIIP at the end of 2016 to go to the Siebel institute in Chicago and Doemens Academy in Munich, Germany as part of the WBA - World Brewing Academy. After winning a Silver Medal for IPA (Riip Super Cali) at the 2016 GABF, my grandfather offered to pay the tuition for school and it was an opportunity I couldn't pass up.

DRENNON: *How valuable was the education you received at Siebel and Doemens?*

MOY: Immeasurable. Going into the WBA with some industry background really helped as well. It helped put into context a lot of the in depth material we were being taught. A lot of that information was almost immediately put to good use in the design and build out of the brewery for GameCraft.

DRENNON: *What was the genesis of GameCraft?*

MOY: GameCraft started as an idea of my co-founder, Scott Cebula. He wanted to open something in Laguna



Andrew Moy (Co-Owner/Head Brewer) and Mike Ewoldt (Assistant Brewer)
All Photos Credit: Matthew Garcia @momentsinbeer

Hills, where he's lived for over 20 years, that brought the community together. Initially he was looking at opening a coffee/beer bar, but as he explored more options and did more research, he saw how local breweries

have been building communities in their respective areas. So, he decided he wanted to open a brewery in Laguna Hills. That was probably easier to approach since he also has been a homebrewer for 20 years.

DRENNON: *Who came up with the cool concept and name?*

MOY: That was Scott mainly. It was a bit of a placeholder at first as we developed the brand and the brewery. We are both gamers and have been for

(COVER STORY continued on page 12)



MJ Doddridge (Support Droid)

(COVER STORY continued)

years, and we wanted to show that in our branding. We saw it as ‘games’ as a whole; video, traditional, board games, etc., meets craft beer. Over time, the name stuck and we went with it.

DRENNON: What are your favorite games?

MOY: Company of Heroes, Starcraft, Fallout Series and Overwatch.

DRENNON: Is there a philosophy to your brewing?

MOY: Beer is a complex beverage but I think generally, I like to take a simplistic approach to it. You don’t have to get super crazy with all different types of adjuncts or rare ingredients to make great beer. I think SMASH (Single Malt and Single Hop) IPAs are a great example. It’s back to the four main ingredients in beer; water, malt, hops, and yeast. You just have to let the ingredients speak for themselves.

DRENNON: Do you have favorite styles?

MOY: I think right now I have gravitated to just more ‘sessionable’ beer in general. There’s just something nice about being able to have a couple great tasting beers without getting too full or bogged down from bigger, ‘heavier’ beers.

DRENNON: In addition to being impressed by the beer at GameCraft, I’m a big fan of the food. It is not predictable pub grub. How do you view the pairing of the food and the beer at GameCraft?

MOY: From conception, we wanted food pairings as a main component of the tap room. Scott and I both



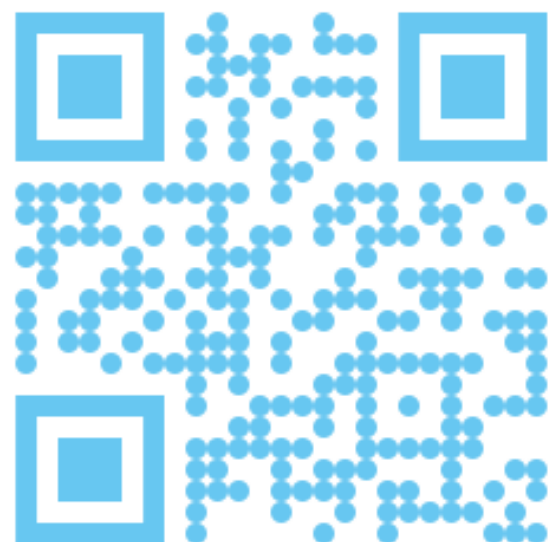
Andrew Moy (Co-Owner/Head Brewer)

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enjoy eating, drinking, and exploring different flavors. In my opinion, beer is a much better beverage to pair foods with than wine. There's such a diversity in flavors; sweet, bitter, sour, chocolate, fruit, salt (gose), etc. With the pairings we take the approach of the beer highlighting the food, or the food highlighting the beer. With our Asian/Latin fusion pub food, we have a lot of options and flavors with which to play around.

DRENNON: *I'd be remiss to not ask how GameCraft navigated what I call the "Damnemic" that challenged every brewery to even survive? How were you able to pivot to meet the seemingly ever changing rules and regulations of the past two years?*

MOY: Well, we certainly did a lot of pivoting. At first it was definitely a shock and a challenge while everything was 'to-go' only. For the beer, the pandemic forced our hand into purchasing a canning line so we could offer more of our core beers in smaller formats which has been pretty popular and a good addition for us. Fortunately for the tap room, we always had a kitchen and a well sized outdoor space so we could distantly

seat guests and keep up with the food requirements.

DRENNON: *What are your goals for the brewery and for yourself individually as a brewer?*

MOY: As a brewer, I am loving the trend toward sessionable styles, ales and lagers. It has been great to see GameCraft as one of the leaders in the return of great, super drinkable beer. For the brewery, it would be awesome to continue to see GameCraft turn into a respected regional brewery, hang out spot, and community builder in South OC.

DRENNON: *To become an excellent brewer, which is more important: talent or work ethic?*

MOY: Work ethic for sure. If you're not willing to put the time and effort into your craft, then even if you have talent, you'll never see it amount to anything.

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

MOY: Nerd.



Slow pour Pilsner

All Photos Credit: Matthew Garcia @momentsinbeer



GameCraft brewery

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INLAND EMPIRE

ESCAPE TO YOUR NEW HAPPY PLACE

by Andrew Smith

Over the past year, nobody has made a bigger impact on the Inland Empire craft beer scene than Escape Craft Brewery. They've expanded to three locations. Their new Redlands homebase is a showpiece. And, last year, they medaled at GABF and won Best of Show at San Diego.

"In the beginning it was just Josh, me, and Scott (Wiener)," said Melissa Fisher, one half of the husband/wife Escape ownership, "Now we have 46 employees." Josh Fisher was a San Bernardino firefighter who had spent many years homebrewing on his days off.

He quickly progressed from bottling to a 3-tap kegerator, then an 8-tap kegerator. "Our friends knew that if the garage door was open, you could come over and hang out," Fisher added, "People started telling us that we should open up a brewery."

The original location, now the secondary location and "Barrelhouse," was something of a hodgepodge of recycled materials. "We built everything, the only thing new was the brewhouse," Fisher explained, "Throughout the process lots of people donated supplies and time. I was \$300 overdrawn, but we opened and people showed up."

That "OG" location did have a consistent "Escape" theme. "When you're a firefighter, escaping is pretty important," Fisher laughs, "For us, when you can't get away, an escape meant sitting on a patio enjoying a beer. It's a name that resonates." Escape as broadened to include a travel theme. Notably, the original table tops were made from the doors of a historic Redlands hotel. "It's more rustic than we would have designed." Fisher continued, "But it worked when we really didn't have a budget." They expanded that location to 10,000 square feet when they acquired the adjoining unit. It made for a fun, happening spot.

Like most breweries in 2015, Escape was built for distribution. "We had 80 wholesale accounts, but we had to scale that back," said Fisher. The 5-barrel system was being pushed to the limit and they were faced with the dilemma of running out of favorites at the taproom. "It was a big shift, but the profitability and sustainability was in our tasting rooms," she added.

From humble beginnings, 2021 was a huge year for Escape securing them as one of the most noteworthy breweries in the IE. They opened a taproom in



(INLAND EMPIRE continued on page 16) Showing Off San Diego Best Of Show

Photo Courtesy of Escape Craft Brewery

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(INLAND EMPIRE continued)

Laguna Niguel in January, then moved the brewery to downtown Redlands in May. The new headquarters added a 15-barrel system and almost doubled fermentation space. Laguna Niguel got the original 5-barrel system for experimental and special releases. The “OG” brewery is now the “Barrelhouse.”

Escape’s new Downtown Oasis is impressive, a renovated building that dates back to 1906. It’s in the newly revitalized packing district of Redlands. The neighborhood is now a vibrant collection of restaurants, stores, and a movie theater. J. Riley Distillery also built a restaurant across the parking lot. There’s a park behind the brewery with walking trails that will soon lead to a train station.

The shiny new brewhouse sits left of the entrance as you head in towards the bar. They’ve also added a kitchen that’s crafting high-quality food. The creative pizzas are a highlight, but they offer a wide selection that extends to vegan options, kid options, and even a doggie menu.

The decor is remarkably bright and

vibrant. Walls, painted orange and teal, are adorned with a plethora of indoor plants. The bar and table tops are constructed from epoxy tree stumps and a fallen Redlands cypress tree. The main taproom is a vast open space, while there are two separate patios and a game room, allowing everyone to choose their own personal escape. The back patio is especially appealing, looking out towards the park.

“Unlike the original location, I had time and money to create a nicer design,” Fisher commented, “We still have a lot of recycled items, but I was able to have a lot more same things to give it that cohesiveness.” It’s noticeable. “A lot of breweries of yesterday were darker,” she continued, “We wanted to bring in an experience. The days of sitting on a keg in a brewery are gone.” Readers of CraftBeerIE.com recently voted Escape’s Downtown Oasis, Best Brewery Taproom and Brewery With Best Food.

The move has brought greater acclaim to the beer program too. It’s no coincidence that the new brewhouse saw a deluge of accolades in 2021. First, there was a bronze



Taste The Escape

Photo Credit: Andrew Smith



Escape's New Downtown Oasis

Photo Credit: Andrew Smith

at GABF for their West Coast IPA, Civil Disturbance. “That beer is our sweetheart and a go to,” commented Fisher, “We were so honored to be recognized in such a huge category and big competition.”

San Diego International brought four medals, plus Best Of Show for Irish Crossfit Red. “To win one medal at San Diego was big,” noted Fisher, “Then, we were looking down the list and there was another one, and then another one. We were astounded when Irish Crossfit got Best Of Show. It’s always been a good solid beer that’s been getting more attention over the past year. But to beat out so many amazing breweries and popular styles was unbelievable.”

Fisher admits that Escape is “IPA strong.” They’ve always offered wheats, sours, stouts, and lagers. But the new set up has allowed them to expand their offerings in every genre. Lagers have benefited from the added space. Stouts and barrel-aged beers are on the rise, in part due to the Barrelhouse. It promises a great deal as new barrels arrive and Laguna gets up and running.

Escape has struck up deals with a couple of neighbors on their barrel program. They recently released a 2-year port-barrel stout collaboration with Soveg Cellars in Yucaipa. They also get a regular shipment of spirit barrels from their neighbor, J. Riley. We’ll soon see an interesting collaboration. J. Riley distilled Escape’s Bike Ryed IPA and aged it

for 5 years. Escape got the barrels back and used them to age their own beer. The two will be released side by side.

“The growth has been outstanding,” declared Fisher, “We did 900 barrels in 2020, 1,800 in 2021, and we’ll do 2,500 this year.” It should see them reassessing distribution, to an extent. “Our wholesalers are our marketers,” said Fisher, “They let people know we’re here and we get a lot of requests from people outside the Redlands area.”

That said, it’s the local community that continues to drive the brewery forward. Fisher describes herself as a lifelong entrepreneur and her passion is in event planning. There’s always something happening at the brewery from fundraisers to pet adoptions, and a busy pop-up market. Throughout the brewery, you’ll see numerous partnerships and cross-promotions of local businesses. Even when there isn’t an event, Escape’s taproom is a bustling spot.

“It’s a big honor to have created a space where people want to spend their time,” adds Fisher, “Whether someone is celebrating or mourning, we can hand them a glass of happiness.” To that extent, Escape’s new taproom truly lives up to its name.

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

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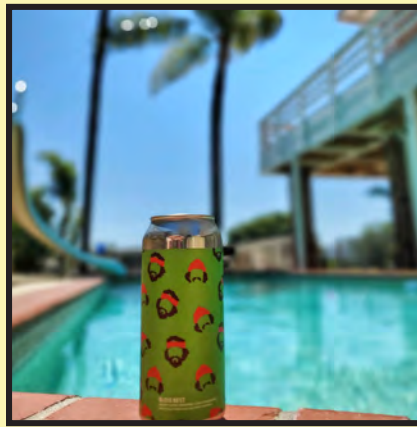
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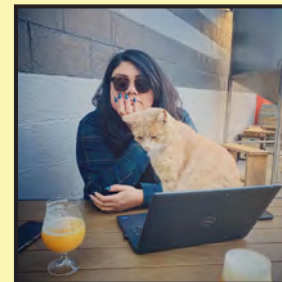
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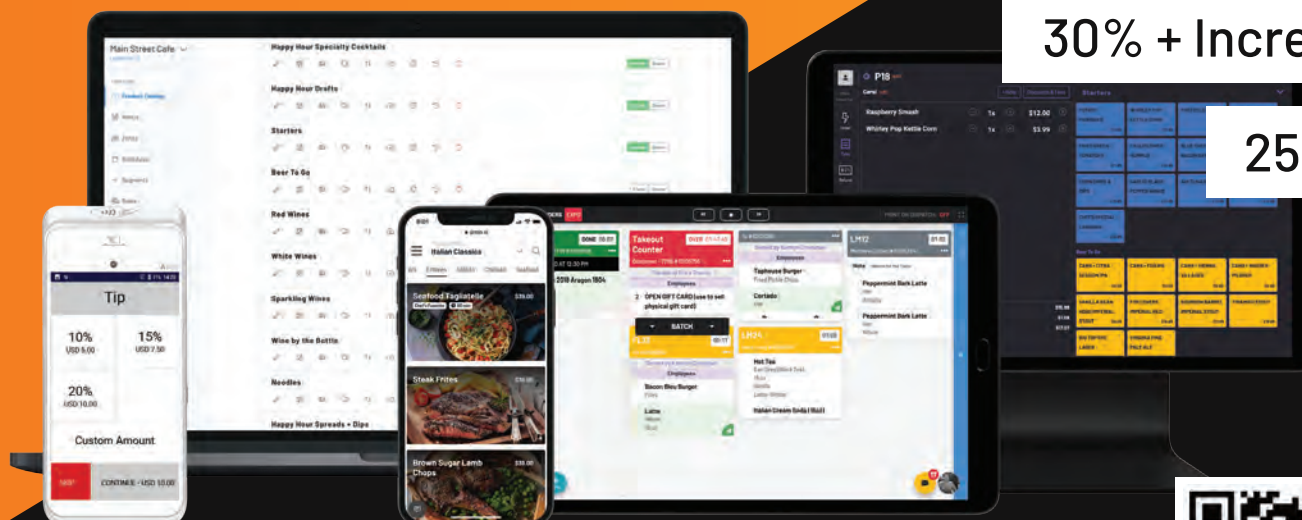
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