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SUPER SUDS AND PERFECT PIES



Stephen Feldt, Assistant Brewer, with Jon Eckelberger, Head Brewer

Photo Courtesy of Pizza Port Brewing

by Daniel Drennon

It has been an incredible 35-year run of excellence since the dynamic sister/brother duo Gina and Vince Marsaglia launched their first Pizza Port brewpub in Solana Beach in 1987. Known for launching the careers

of "rock star" brewers and racking up nearly 100 medals at the Great American Beer Festival, Pizza Port has become a California treasure. Now up to six locations, the success of Pizza Port has, without question, inspired the recent rise in independent breweries launching their

own pizza joints.

San Clemente, their third brewpub, opened in 2003 and launched the career of Ryan Fields, who went on to Beachwood Blendery fame and then his own brewpub, Wild Fields, which recently won four gold medals at the

World Beer Cup. Following in Fields massive footsteps was Trevor Walls who continued the tradition of beautifully crafted brews and who went onto become Chief Brewing Officer at Brewery X. Other notable alums from San Clemente are Noah Regnery, Director

of Brewing, Artisanal Craft Brewers Collective and Kane Christensen, now the Head Brewer at Trademark Brewing in Long Beach.

Continuing that impressive legacy is current Head Brewer Jon Eckelberger.

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FEATURE STORY

Upshifting from Golden Road

by Daniel Drennon

Steven Torres is the long-time assistant brewer to one of the most award-winning and critically-acclaimed brewers on the planet, Victor Novak. First at TAPS and most recently at Golden Road. When I say assistant, make no mistake that Torres is and has been a Head Brewer at both locations. Under Novak, Mr. Torres has honed his brewing skills to a razor-sharp edge.

When he made the move to leave AB InBev-owned Golden Road and become a partner and the brewmaster at relatively small Upshift Brewing in El Segundo, quite frankly I, and maybe most of the brewing world, was startled. What was not startling however is that Upshift beers immediately became worth the trek to El Segundo from wherever you live in greater Los Angeles.

Simply put. The man is a bad ass brewer. Before that, the man was...a mail man. Let's start there, shall we?

DRENNON: *So, Steven. I have interviewed many brewers over the years. Many are engineers or chemists and, at a minimum, some scientific and technical background. You, my friend, were a mail man. How long were you a mail man?*

TORRES: Love the way this interview is starting already! I was a Letter Carrier for 15 years in the city of Hawthorne.

DRENNON: *You must have had some memorable experiences delivering mail. If you can, please tell us your funniest story and your craziest stories...and maybe they are one and the same.*

TORRES: Being out in the streets, you see and hear MANY different things, some of which I probably shouldn't disclose in this article. But let's just say this, your Letter Carrier sees, hears, and knows more about you than you think. Although, I do remember one of my customers was an older woman, who was a veteran. She lived alone, so I would make sure to knock on the door and hand her mail directly to her, just to check up on her. Every day, she would ask me if I wanted to have a beer with her. Obviously, I kindly refused every time.



Steven Torres at Upshift Brewing Co

Photo Credit: Kendall Kieseewetter

The way she asked me though, it was like her one wish. As I came toward the last days of my career at the P.O., I accepted that one beer with her. She was so grateful, and I can still picture her smile till this day.

DRENNON: *What a beautiful story. Where did you grow up and how did that influence the person you are today?*

TORRES: I was born and raised in Los Angeles. I love this town. I love the culture, and the melting pot that it is. I'm proud of our town.

DRENNON: *I presume like every pro brewer on Earth, you started as a homebrewer. When and how did that happen?*

TORRES: My story is a little different the typical homebrewing professional that I hear. I only homebrewed a couple of times with my friend, Brian "Herbie Homebrew" Herbertson. I always enjoyed beer, and always had some sort of interest in brewing my own. As my eyes opened to the world of craft beer, with all the different colors, flavors, aromas, etc. I asked the question, how? I wanted to learn how there are so many differences

in styles, from just four ingredients. It started by reading any book or magazine about beer I could. Also, while I was delivering my route, I'd listen to podcasts, like The Brewing Network and the MBAA, on how to brew, brewing styles, etc. I would probably get through three hours' worth of podcasts a day. Then I'd go home and read. This is all before I even attempted to homebrew. It kind of turned into an obsession, more than a hobby. At that point, I still haven't homebrewed. So typically, people will say to homebrew first, to see if you like it, then learn as you go. I agree with this, but at the time, I wanted my first homebrew to be perfect. I wanted (to what I thought at the time) to know everything about brewing, before my first attempt. Now I know, that can never happen. It's a never-ending learning process. Eventually, over time, my good friend Herbie, who was a great homebrewer (now a professional brewer at Lucky Luke), invited me over to collaborate on a Double IPA and brew together. We called it, "Mas Chingon." Before I had any hands-on experience, I was having conversations with brewers about mash temps, water chemistry, etc.

DRENNON: *Was there a particular beer or brewery that ignited your passion for beer and brewing?*

TORRES: I drank a lot of cheap crappy beer in my early 20's. Then on one of my birthdays, my friend bought me a 64 oz growler of Jerimiah Red, from BJ's in the late 90's. I drank half of that thing, and my mind was blown! It could have been that I was feeling good, but I was fascinated. Then I soon found out about Sierra Nevada Pale, Boston Lager, etc. But I didn't really dive deep into it, until I lived next to a craft beer liquor store in Whittier called Liquor Mart. I walked in there and was almost overwhelmed with the variety of so many different beers. I randomly bought bombers of beers not knowing styles at all and would drink them and study them. That's when geekdom kicked in.

When Rob (Croxall) at El Segundo Brewing and Julian (Shrago) at Beachwood Brewing started making fresh local IPAs I was already head over heels in love with craft beer. I love hops and West Coast style IPAs so to have those guys making amazing, fresh IPAs locally was astounding! On the flip side, I found myself being



L-R: Kendall (Head of Brand), Steve (co-owner), Odeth (Taproom manager), and Steven (brewer and co-owner)
Photo by Matthew Herrera

fascinated with delicate classic styles of beer. Lagers. Then I discovered TAPS where Victor Novak was making the greatest classic styles around. So, studying different hard to find styles, I would visit TAPS for happy hour lunches and try fresh, hard to find classic styles.

DRENNON: *How and where did you get your first job in a brewery?*

TORRES: Perfect segue. It's 2014, I heard TAPS had just released their Schwarzbier. Not many breweries, if any were releasing Schwarzbier in LA/OC in 2014. So, my wife at the time and I headed over for lunch in the afternoon because I was dying to try it. We sat at the bar enjoying our lunch, and Victor was behind the bar doing what seemed to be a beer class. I eavesdropped on the whole lecture. After he was done, I had introduced myself and congratulated him on the great beers. We struck up a small conversation, and in that

conversation, he mentioned he was looking to hire an Assistant Brewer. I remember thinking, "How cool would it be to be an assistant brewer to Victor Novak?" But I also had professional brewer friends, and know how much brewers make and knew it would be a real struggle to support my family on that wage. Victor leaves, and all I can remember is the conversation with my ex-wife, and her saying, "At least ask, and find out. You never know." So, on my way out of the restaurant, I find Victor and inquire. The connection already felt comfortable. He asks me to come back another day and he'll interview me and ask me a few questions about the process to see where I'm at. As I come back for the interview, talking with Victor, I wasn't nervous and felt confident about the questions he would ask me. Not in an arrogant way, it just felt right. He then brought me in for a second and a third interview. Not because he was doubting my ability to brew, but he

was nervous about me leaving the Post Office for a new career that I may not enjoy. I remember being nervous with the decision to leave the Post Office as well. I asked all my friends and family for their opinions. Ultimately, I used all my vacation leave and some leave without pay, for about a month at the Post Office to try out the brewing

career. The very first day I was on the job as the Assistant Brewer at TAPS, I knew...and I know it sounds corny to say, but I KNEW this is what I was meant to do.

DRENNON: *In addition to being a close friend, Victor Novak has been a mentor to you. What would you say are the most important lessons you have learned from him when it comes to brewing?*

TORRES: True statement. Victor is one of my best friends. He has always been there for me in my career, in the highs and in the lows. Heck, I was even honored to be in his wedding.

Victor taught me to be very detailed, that there are no short cuts in brewing, and that quality ingredients and quality work will show in the finished product. Never stop learning and continue to grow as a brewer every day. I can list things all day, but just being around him for most of my eight-plus year career, I can say I've probably learned something every day from this man. He's always pushing to learn more, which gave me the mind-set to want to push to learn more.

(FEATURE STORY continued on page 6)



Formula 1 viewing

Photo Credit: Brendan Behar



(FEATURE STORY continued)

DRENNON: *If you are willing to talk about it, what were the highs and lows of working in the AB InBev empire? Did they micromanage you and Mr. Novak or were they relatively hands off?*

TORRES: I don't mind speaking about working for AB InBev. Victor and I worked at the Golden Road in Anaheim together. Anaheim was the innovation brewery, so we basically were able to innovate, learn new processes, try any ingredients we ever wanted without ever being questioned. We came up with a lot of new brands together and it was fun. It was like we had our own brewery together. If we were making quality beer, and it sold well, we were left alone. We never had anyone micromanage us or our work. Also, Golden Road gave me the opportunity to send me to Hop Selection for five years, take the MBAA Brewing and Science course in Madison, WI, and schooling for the AB Brewmaster course. I've traveled and poured beer across the U.S. including the Capitol and New York. For that, I am grateful.

DRENNON: *I am sure the pay and benefits of working for a huge corporation was a silver lining*

at Golden Road, so then take me through how this miraculous upshift to Upshift occurred?

TORRES: Steve Behar is the founder and owner of Upshift Brewing Co. He lives in Hawthorne where I used to be a Letter Carrier. Steve had an idea to open a brewery with his homebrewer friend in 2015. My friend Jesse who is still a Letter Carrier in Hawthorne is his carrier till this day. Steve and Jesse struck up a conversation about Steve opening a brewery and immediately I popped up in Jesse's mind. Jesse let's me know about this idea and gives Steve my number in hopes that I could give him some advice or help along his brewer with any questions. One day, Victor and I met Steve and Eric (his original brewer) at their soon to be brewery location. At that time, it was just a dusty old warehouse. We tasted Eric's beers on the back of Steve's little Toyota truck and gave constructive advice. I even brought Eric down to the brewery in Anaheim for a brewday, so he would know what to expect when his brewery opened. Steve and I always kept in touch whenever he had a question.

In early 2021, unfortunately, his brewer left the brewery and Steve needed to hire a brewer. Steve didn't



Upshift outdoor patio

Photo Credit: Kendall Kiesewetter

know what to look for in a brewer as far as qualifications, skills, etc. So, he asked me if I could help him look over resumes. After a while of struggling to find a brewer, and one night while talking on the phone, I mentioned that if he wanted to attract a brewer that could run his brewery, he probably would have to pay really well, or give some equity in the brewery. Then, I mentioned, if he did decide to go that route, to let me know so I can send over my resume. I always told Victor,

the only way I would leave G.R. is for equity in a brewery. So here we are! I started in October of 2021. We closed the brewery for a month in November to do some work on the brewery, and started with all new beer on the board in December! I'm coming up on my one-year anniversary at Upshift and it has been nothing but amazing! The people I work with there have been awesome. We are setting goals and striving to grow.

DRENNON: *Finally, something I know you will be excited to talk about --- your beers! Tell me your philosophy of brewing at Upshift and which beers you are most proud of so far.*

TORRES: YES! (laughing) This can be long winded, so I'll try and keep it as short as I can. Like I've mentioned, I have always been a fan of classic styles of beer, my favorite being German styles. So being that we are a car and motorcycle themed brewery, it seemed like a perfect fit to brew classic styles. Everything from a Kolsch, German Pilsner, ESB, Irish Red, Porter, Schwarzbier, and so on. Not to say that's all that Upshift will have on the board. I like to be innovative as well, so there will always be something fresh and new on the board, such as Fruited-Wheat Ales, Hazy IPAs, Stouts, and (grinning) Stouts with stuff in them. I also love my hops. I started a Single-Hop series called, "Single Track Series." Single Hop IPAs are a great way for me as a brewer to find out exactly what this one hop is and can contribute to a beer. Not only for me, but it's cool as a consumer to know what each hop brings to the table as far as aroma and flavor. It's a great learning experience. I know in the past, it was said that single hopped IPAs can be one dimensional and boring. But as of recent years, hop profiles have changed dramatically as farmers are dialing in their breeding process. There are a lot more hops on the market now and a lot of these hops are very complex in aroma and flavor. They are not only dual-purpose hops, but they are complex enough to make a great IPA on their own. This series will not only be focused on classic hops, popular hops, but it will include unreleased experimental hops, along with newer innovated hop products as well. Single Track #1 was with Michigan Cashmere. My friend, Mallory King with Hop Head Farms had mentioned it to me. I love

Cashmere from the Pacific Northwest (PNW) so I was interested to see what terroir would do with Cashmere grown in Michigan. Is there any difference in Cashmere between the ones grown in the PNW or Michigan. Single Track Series #2 is featuring an unreleased experimental hop from my friends at John Segal Hop Ranch in Washington. This is a cool collaboration to learn how this hop expresses in finished beer rather than just rubbing it off the bine. This is a very exciting series for me. I already have plenty lined up with some great collaborations with farmers and industry friends.

The last thing I am extremely proud of is that, with only a 10 bbl system, and four FVs, I was able to make six German-Style beers for our Oktoberfest even that happened on September 17th. I brewed a German-Style Marzen, German-Style Pilsner, Kellerpils, German-Style Schwarzbier, Munich-Style Helles and a Bavarian-Style Hefeweizen. Super exciting! The board will always have something new, so if you follow our social media, we'll be continuously posting our new beers.

DRENNON: *I like to ask every brewer which they think is more important, talent or world ethic?*

TORRES: Hands down, work ethic. There are no short cuts in brewing. If you are not willing to work long hours, get dirty, cannot multitask, pay attention to the small details, and CLEAN, this will just turn into a tiring, dirty job. With work ethic, comes pride. With pride, comes the willingness or wanting to learn more. That's the talent.

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

TORRES: Grateful. (smiling again) Grateful you took the time to read this whole interview.

I asked Victor Novak what he saw in Steven Torres.
This is his response.

"When I first hired Steven as an Assistant Brewer at TAPS back in 2014, the number one quality he had in spades was Determination with a capital D. Knowing he had 15+ years with the Postal Service and a wife and young son, the GM at TAPS and I interviewed him at least three times to convince him NOT to take the job, but he would not be deterred! Steven had homebrewed some but really didn't have much practical brewing experience. However, it was obvious he had done a lot of reading and had a true passion for beer and the art and science behind it. It was kind of like when my beloved Rams were interviewing Sean McVay for the HC job. After the interview process was done, the Rams brass said how can they hire this guy, he's all of 31 years-old?! But they also said how could they NOT hire him since his knowledge and passion for the game were obvious and infectious. Well, the rest is history for the Super Bowl Champs and Steven has proven to be an equally phenomenal hire!

The other keys to Steven's success at TAPS, Golden Road, and now as Brewmaster/co-owner of Upshift, are an indefatigable work ethic, a true passion to keep learning, and an absolute commitment to quality. He works his tail off in the brewery, he's always reading and/or listening to podcasts, and he's less worried about being considered a rock star brewer (which he is!) than he is about ensuring his guests are enjoying the hell out the fruits of his labor. I honestly was shocked I was able to work with him as long as I did. I knew someone would be smart enough to scoop him up and give him an opportunity to put his own unique stamp on this incredible industry."

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HAVE BEER WILL TRAVEL

BLAZING AN OREGON BEER TRAIL

by Tomm Carroll



About half of the beer taps at Growler Guys, Ashland

Photo Credit: Tomm Carroll

Two hundred years ago, the original Oregon trail was being laid by trappers and fur traders, and was passable only by foot. Twenty years later, in 1852, the then-Oregon Territory's first commercial brewery was established by Swiss-born Henry Saxer in Portland: the Liberty Brewery. A decade on, in 1862 (three years after Oregon had become the 33rd state of the US), Liberty was purchased, expanded and renamed by a German

who had worked at, and later owned, small breweries in the Washington Territory. His legacy continued. And his name is familiar to early craft beer drinkers in the late 1970s '80s and beyond — especially those who shopped at Trader Joe's — when his namesake beer was rebranded as a microbrew: Henry Weinhard.

Last month, I took a late-summer vacation and attempted to blaze my

own Oregon beer trail of sorts, given the somewhat surprising (even to me) fact that I had never set foot in the state before — other than to change planes at PDX. Inordinately high temperatures and overcast skies (hazier than the beers!) from Oregon's many wildfires were my almost constant companions — unpleasant, but less objectionable than, say, hangovers — which I mostly managed to avoid.

I began my trek in Southern Oregon's tiny Ashland, which unfortunately lost one of its two breweries when Standing Stone Brewing shuttered a few months ago. And the one left standing, Caldera Brewing, was not open the days I was in the area. Fortunately, there are several craft beer pub/restaurants in town.

Skout, on the Ashland Creek by Lithia Park, was one of them, and had a

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Barrel-aged tasters at AleSong Brewery and Blendery just outside of Eugene
 Photo Credit: Tomm Carroll

great beer list. I started with draught brews from two Portland breweries I would wind up visiting later in the trip. Chuckanut's Vienna Lager was suitably malty with nice fruity notes, and balanced with a mild bitterness. I had heard that despite its reputation for wacky adjunct beers, Great Notion also makes classic, and less trendy styles, so I ordered its Thumbsplitter Pale Ale. A 4% straw/golden clear pale with not-too-strong tropical flavors from the hops, plus the requisite bitterness, it proved a wonderful modern example of the style, and a refreshing thirst-quencher for a 90°+ afternoon.

Not far away was Growler Guys, housed in a former gas station. Not only are all the beers available to go in the vessels in the bar's name, but there are over 40 taps of beer, plus hard seltzer, kombucha, etc. Interestingly, the taps are aligned, left to right, not by abv, or by flavor profile (hoppy, malty, sour...), but by the color of the brew — from light to dark. That was a first for me.

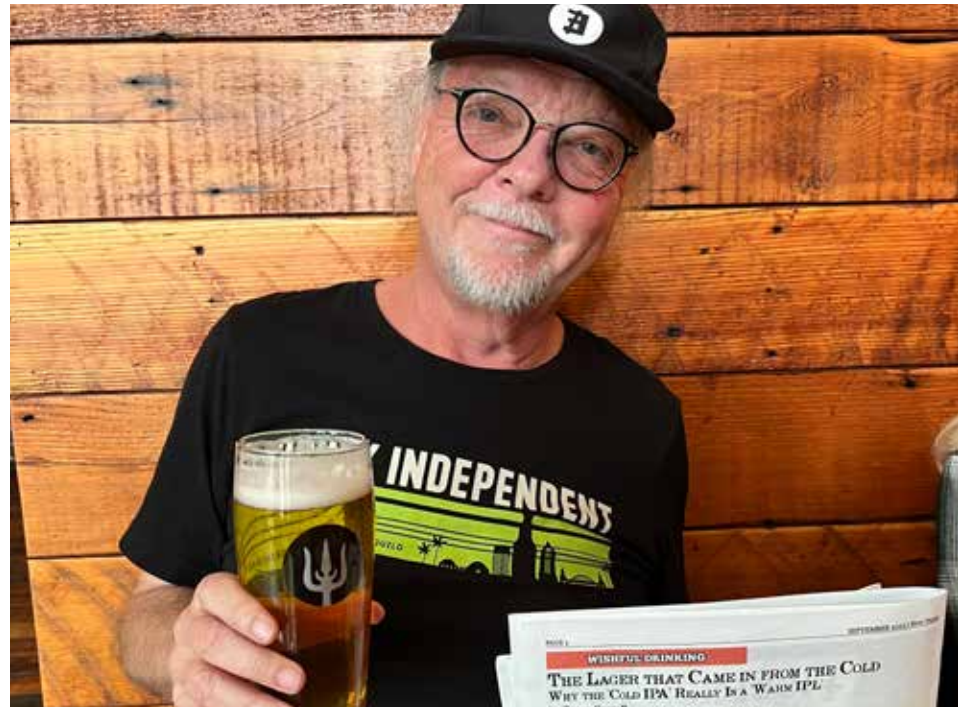
Chuckanut's always-to-style Pilsner was on tap, so I had to start there, and marveled at the breadly malt flavor that continued even as the beer warmed a bit. After sampling several splashes of a dark beer to which to commit, I settled on Grease Monkey Porter from Ratchet Brewing of Silverton. It was a well-made roasty porter with a nice, noticeable hop presence that did not clash with the roast. Likewise, multiple tastes of IPAs I didn't already know yielded a full pour of 3-Way, a hazy collab from Fort George Brewing of Astoria, with CA's Alvarado Street and WA's Ravenna. No real fan of the style, I must concede it was one of the best, most drinkable hazies I've tried (and finished), aside from Monkish releases.

What I found intriguing was that not only were there no Cold IPAs at either Ashland bar I visited, but that the beertenders at both said they had not even heard of the style, despite it having originated upstate. Speaking of which...

Next stop: Eugene, about three hours north on Interstate 5. One of the highlights of that city, if not the whole beer trail, was the afternoon spent at the amazing countryside brewery and blendery just outta town known as AleSong. Fittingly, it was the only day in Oregon that the sun made an extended appearance for longer than a few minutes. I ordered tasters of all eight of the exquisite barrel-aged brews on draught and got a tour of the farmhouse facility.

From sours to stouts, every one of these beer blends featured complex layers of aromas and flavors, but my three favorites — of which I purchased bottles to take home — were Stonefruit Symphony (more tart than sour with a gorgeous nose and flavor of peach and nectarine, enhanced by the woody notes from the French oak barrels), Gose Añejo (surprisingly light on the tequila flavor as well as the sourness, with the agave syrup and citrus zest contributing an unexpected sweetness) and Mocha Rhino Suit (a 12.2% BBA Imperial Milk Stout with coffee and cocoa that drank like chocolate milk for adults).

Also, in downtown Eugene, I dropped by Coldfire Brewing (which supplies the wort for many of AleSong's fermentations and aging) and had a Golden Arms Belgian-style Farmhouse Ale, and a close-to-perfect West Coast IPA from the brewery's Alpha Craft Series of single-hop beers. Then it was over to "The Better Living



At Wayfinder Beer in Portland: LOVE the Cold IPA, not so hot on the name
 Photo Credit: Gregory Schwartz

Room" taproom and restaurant of the renowned Ninkasi Brewing, where I sampled a Cold Pale Ale, a Cold Double IPA, and a Cold Triple IPA. (When in Rome — wait a minute, that would be Portland; that's coming up next...) Essentially, hoppy lagers at various strengths and hop levels.

Reaching Beervana

Another three-hour trek up the 5 and I found myself in "Beervana." The trail, of course, culminates in Portland — geographically and zymurgically. Who knew that smoky skies and unseasonably warm weather would be so conducive to beer drinking? But then again, it is PDX!

(HAVE BEER WILL TRAVEL, continued on page 10)

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(HAVE BEER WILL TRAVEL continued)

The plethora of breweries and taprooms seemed more interesting on the eastside of the Willamette River, across from downtown, so I stayed there. First stop was Culmination Brewing, as it was walking distance to my hotel. The brewpub excels at lagers, including a clean and semi-crisp Pils with sweetish bready malt balanced by hops, a Vienna Lager and even an Altbier, the last one a style seldom seen on US craft brewery tap handles. The Vienna and the Alt both looked and tasted almost the same, with one slightly lighter in color, a touch less malty and with some grassy notes as it warmed. That one, I guessed correctly, was the Vienna; tasty, but missing the mark somewhat. Even Fire Moon, the Cold Pale Ale, was a clean, hoppy light lager — which of course led to a discussion of my September *Beer Paper* articles with the sympathetic beertender, whose name I unfortunately forgot.

Speaking of which, I next visited Wayfinder Beer, where the Cold IPA was originated and (mis)named, thereby serving as the impetus for my *Beer Paper* rant last month. Brewer

Kevin Davey was not there, it being a Saturday afternoon, but I showed one of the more knowledgeable employees the article and left several copies of the issue with him to pass on.

I am happy to admit that I loved the Original Cold IPA, even having a second one and purchasing a four-pack of it to go. (Tongue-in-cheekily/ironically enough, the message printed on the bottom of the cans, by the canning date, was “HOT IPL”). It was a wonderfully hoppy adjunct lager on tap, and easily the best-tasting version I’ve drunk to date. The clear, clean body and mouthfeel was like a liquid antidote to the murky air encompassing Portland, which smelled like the second runnings of a flawed Rauchbier — a beer style I prefer to drink, not breathe.

With the success of its OG Cold IPA, it’s no secret that Wayfinder is known as a lager-centric brewpub. The Pärty Time Pilsner was spot-on, rivaling Chuckanut’s style-definer. I’ll need to drink them side-by-side. The Luna Muerta Vienna Lager was quite good, perfect on color, but a touch lacking in the malt department.

I already raved about Chuckanut’s



Cask ales at Away Days Brewing

All Photos Credit: Tomm Carroll

beers at previous stops along my Oregon Beer Trail, so I had to visit its P. Nut brewery and taproom in Portland to try some of the styles I hadn’t had yet. The Maibock and the Dunkel were exemplars of their respective styles, and the Festbier was smooth, balanced and a golden yellow in color (as the German beers brewed for Oktoberfest have been for nearly a half-century now). The Cascadia Common Lager (see, not *everyone* is afraid to correctly name a beer made with warm-fermented lager yeast!) was an interesting experiment. Adding a Pacific Northwest twist to the Steam/California Common style, the beer features a blend of Yakima-grown hops along with traditional German varieties — in the kettle and via dry-hopping — to give this hybrid a local lupulin lift.

Chuckanut’s Rauchbier was the most interesting to me. Unsurprisingly brewed in the Bamberg tradition, this Märzen-based brew tastes of pure smoke, but not the meat or fish components that are sometimes imagined while drinking lesser-quality rauch lagers. The palate is smooth, and as the beer warms, some caramelized flavors and subtle fruity notes from the malt begin to emerge. I’m not used to tasting such complexity in a draught Rauchbier in this country.

The Detroit-style pizza of nearby Baerlic Brewing’s Southeast Piehall location made it the perfect spot for dinner after a day of drinking. My meal was enhanced by a Nugs Fresh Hop West Coast IPA, brewed with Nugget, Centennial and fresh Strata hops that made the Calabrian peppers on my uber-slice all the more uber-spicy, finishing off my already fatigued palate.

But not enough to mask the fact that the Blippo (alleged) Italian-style Pilsner, was Franco-fied. A single hop (French Aramis) was used to hop, and double dry-hop, the beer, instead of using only Noble hops, as the style calls for. I called it a night after a real change-up, palate-cleansing nightcap: the spontaneously fermented Son of Man – Sagardo Basque-style dry cider.

The next day was an away day. Or at least the brewery/taproom was. Away Days, a nano-brewery, had two cask beers on hand pumps among its 10 other keg beers. They were an ESB (malty-sweet and thin) and Summerisle Cream Ale, the latter a collab with Wayfinder (kind of like a British Summer Ale, but made with flaked maize, and a tad too sweet for how light-bodied it was). There was another real ale (Milner’s Mild, a dark brown beer with ruby highlights and light fruity notes) on offer at the brewery’s next-door sibling, the Toffee Club pub, which also has a couple of Nitro taps, and a selection of local beers.

The two cask ales were more traditional and better made at Upright Brewing, one of Portland’s most respected beer-makers. When I visited, the pair of beer engines were pumping a Golden Ale and a Yorkshire-style Stout. At 4.0%, the Golden was single-hopped with Triumph, and was dry and mildly flavored, with the Maris Otter/Optic malt bill making for an exceedingly light body. The 3.9% Stout was chocolaty and roasty, but with notes of slate and some phenolic touches.

The keg beers, however were more experimental: Spellbinder, an open-fermented Pilsner style made with floral American hops; Four Play, an oaky and tart two-year-barrel-aged

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Saison blended with fresh cherries in a foeder; and Katsuobushi, a collaboration with Japanese craft brewery Fujikazura resulting in a umami-forward Schwarzbier made with smoked malt and bonito. The last one was definitely the most unique. All seemed to require acquiring a taste.

Sometimes a Great Notion

Unintentionally, I saved my last brewery visit in Portland to be the dessert of the trip: the original Great Notion Brewing location in the Alberta Arts District. Great Notion, of course, is where the local popularity of the pastry stouts and smoothie (kettle) sours was born in Beervana.

My taster flight started with the brewery's renowned and aptly named Blueberry Muffin Fruit in the Can Sour Smoothie, 6.0%. As advertised, and attested to even by those who detest these gimmick beers. Bravo! It smelled and tasted exactly like a fresh blueberry muffin. But is it beer or juice? It tasted more like the latter after it warmed. A 5 oz taster was plenty!



Can you spot the Blueberry Muffin beer in the Great Notion taster flight?

From the post-craft ultra-modern to the historical/back-from-the-dead: Next was Feniks Grodziskie, 3.5%. The only beer style to originate in Poland, and was once extinct, this take on the smoked all-wheat malt ale had just the right amount (subtle) of smoke, but the admittedly light-bodied beer did not have much flavor from the wheat. Maybe I should have tasted it before the Blueberry Muffin!

Then there was the Yoo-Hoo, Yuzu! Japanese Rice Lager, 4.9%. It was a little on the sweet side from the yuzu, but nicely balanced if a bit light on flavor. The body could've supported more citrus-ness. I followed that with the Ripe IPA, 7.0%. Great Notion's flagship NEIPA had a pleasantly juicy mouthfeel, not too sweet nor turbid. Not a bad version to keep the Haze Bro's happy, and drinking well-made beer.

And finally, the dessert of the dessert brewery was...a breakfast beer: Double Stack Imperial (Pastry) Stout, 11%. As its name may give

you a hint, this is another of the brewery's phenomenal gimmick beers. It recreated the aroma and flavor of a maple syrup-laden stack of pancakes with a side of coffee — and was that a taste of bacon I'm getting? Regardless, the beer stacked up nicely against Great Notion's homemade chocolate chip cookies.



Dessert pairing great Notion's Double Stack and a chocolate chip cookie

Do you think Henry Weinhard had a notion, great or otherwise, of what he had wrought?

Tomm Carroll is a 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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COVER STORY

SUPER SUDS AND PERFECT PIES

by Daniel Drennon

It has been an incredible 35-year run of excellence since the dynamic sister/brother duo Gina and Vince Marsaglia launched their first Pizza Port brewpub in Solana Beach in 1987. Known for launching the careers of “rock star” brewers and racking up nearly 100 medals at the Great American Beer Festival, Pizza Port has become a California treasure. Now up to six locations, the success of Pizza Port has, without question, inspired the recent rise in independent breweries launching their own pizza joints.

After all, what better beer pairing is there than beer and pizza?

San Clemente, their third brewpub, opened in 2003 and launched the career of Ryan Fields, who went on to Beachwood Blendery fame and then his own brewpub, Wild Fields, which recently won four gold medals at the World Beer Cup. Following in Fields massive footsteps was Trevor

Walls who continued the tradition of beautifully crafted brews and who went on to become Chief Brewing Officer at Brewery X. Other notable alums from San Clemente are Noah Regnery, Director of Brewing, Artisanal Craft Brewers Collective and Kane Christensen, now the Head Brewer at Trademark Brewing in Long Beach.

Continuing that impressive legacy is current Head Brewer Jon Eckelberger, who has been in that position for four years. Jon started homebrewing as a teenager. His wife Shannon was the bar manager at Pizza Port SC for six years and it was she who introduced her homebrewing hubbie to Walls when he was the brewer in charge. Walls had ascended to Head Brewer in San Clemente after Fields left for Beachwood, and he promptly hired Eckelberger as an assistant brewer along with Kane Christensen.



Stephen Feldt, Assistant Brewer, with Jon Eckelberger, Head Brewer
Photo Courtesy of Pizza Port Brewing

When Walls left Pizza Port, Christensen became Head Brewer with Jon remaining as his Assistant Brewer. Kane subsequently took a new head brewer position elsewhere and then Eckelberger took the reins as head brewer of Pizza Port San Clemente.

Eckelberger's signature original recipe beers are Ollie Pop pale ale and Abbey Mae IPA (Abbey Mae IPA and Ollie Pop Mosaic Pale), named for he and Shannon's daughter and son. Eckelberger also grabbed a Gold Medal at the 2021 World Beer Cup for From Dusk 'Till Dawn, an iconic Imperial Coffee Porter that has long been an award-winner in the sublime Pizza Port line up of their staple recipes.

I sat down with Eckelberger to find out more about him...the latest in a line of Pizza Port rock stars.

DRENNON: Homebrewing as a teenager! How the Hell did that happen?

ECKELBERGER: I remember helping brew a beer with my step brother

and was very intrigued with the whole process. I loved seeing all the mechanics of the brewing process from start to finish, and I've always been a hands-on person.

DRENNON: How many years had you been homebrewing before you got your big break at Pizza Port? Were you part of a homebrew club? Win any awards? In other words, what made you think, “Hey, I could this professionally.”

ECKELBERGER: I was home brewing for about 15 years until I finally got my big break with Pizza Port. I am proud to say that I helped start a home brew club called the ‘Immersion Chillers’ in San Clemente. As for awards, I never entered a home brew competition. It wasn't about that for me. I got my big break when the assistant brewer position opened up at San Clemente. I was already well acquainted with Trevor so he offered me the position.

DRENNON: Where did you grow up and how did that influence the person you are today?

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Jon pouring from the brite tank

Photo Courtesy of Pizza Port Brewing

ECKELBERGER: I grew up in the outskirts of Riverside, with plenty of land to roam around and have fun as a kid. I became a very adventurous kid that was always pushing the limits and became very passionate and driven and wanted to better myself in anything I did.

DRENNON: *You also own a Dental Service business.*

ECKELBERGER: I grew up working with my dad in an electronic business company, so I always loved working with my hands. We came across an opportunity to start an additional company to repair hand pieces for dental companies. Since becoming head brewer, my focus has been on my brewing career and less towards the dental business.

DRENNON: *Have there been specific beers you had or breweries you loved that inspired you to become a brewer?*

ECKELBERGER: Blind Pig for sure! As a kid we would go on ski trips and our family would always bring a keg

of Blind Pig. When the parents would go to bed, we would go out and sample it. This definitely gave me my taste for hoppy beers. To me, this beer is still one of the best, and holds a special place in my heart.

DRENNON: *Pizza Port is legendary as one of the flagships of the armada that is California craft beer. Quite a few world-class and now renowned brewers have paved that path. Was that at all daunting when you took the helm of the brewhouse in San Clemente?*

ECKELBERGER: Yes, but it's actually what drew me to Pizza Port. I wanted to work for one of the best. I had been a regular at Port for years and had always loved their beers and knew one day that I would love to be a part of that history.

DRENNON: *Have you had any brewing mentors along the way and, if so, what are the most important lessons you have learned?*

Eckelberger: The entire Pizza Port brew team that I have had the pleasure

working alongside. Being able to take a little something from everyone I've worked with has grown me into the brewer I am today. Obviously, a nod to Trevor Walls. I wouldn't be here without him. And Bryan Giesen (Head Brewer at Docent Brewing) is pretty cool too.

DRENNON: *You told me the access you have to the entire portfolio of award-winning recipes with notes at Pizza Port San Clemente is invaluable. How so?*

ECKELBERGER: If you could look at 20 years of amazing brew recipes with notes, it would obviously help you grow as a brewer.

DRENNON: *Is there a Pizza Port philosophy of brewing or do they let each of their brewers develop their own style?*

ECKELBERGER: Their philosophy that has carried them through so many awards, is brew the best beer you can and have fun while doing it. They give all their head brewers freedom to brew whatever they would like, within reason of course. It gives brewers a canvas to showcase their creativity through their craft.

DRENNON: *What advice would you give to a homebrewer who aspires to go pro one day?*

ECKELBERGER: Put in the hard work, do your research...and don't ever think you have nothing else to learn. Always stay humble and do your best.

DRENNON: *When you are not brewing, what are your favorite activities or hobbies?*

ECKELBERGER: I love the outdoors, snowboarding and surfing. Honestly any free time that we can sneak away with, I love to spend time with my wife and kids. I love building LEGOs and having time with the kids.

DRENNON: *I like to ask every brewer which they think is more important, talent or world ethic?*

ECKELBERGER: Both kind of work together hand in hand, but I don't know any talented brewers that do not have a great work ethic.

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

ECKELBERGER: Passionate.

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OC BEAT

ORANGE COUNTY BREWERS MASH

by David Mulvihill



OC Brewers Mash

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The Orange County Brewers Guild was established by OC brewers and brewery owners. Its continuing mission is to educate and bring awareness to the public on the benefits and availability of fresh, local craft beer, to promote the interests of its breweries, and to participate in and create local community events to raise funds for charities. Since its inception, festivals and events have been put on to fund the guild and its goals (which include education, community, and inclusion). Its two major and most popular events, the OC Brewers Guild Invitational Fest and the Brewers Mash, took a two-year hiatus, as did many things affected by the craziness of our recent past.

Rejuvenated, rebuilding, and ready to celebrate, the Guild is presenting the return of Brewers Mash, which will take place on Saturday, October 29th. The beautiful grounds of Heritage Museum of Orange County provide setting for this year's Halloween celebration. Everyone is encouraged to come in costume. Guild members, staff and volunteers will be in costume as well, with their serving stations decorated in a variety of themes of

the season. Live entertainment and costume contest are on the agenda. As in past years, attendees will be able to cast a vote for the best decorated and themed booth. Brewers Mash presents a showcase of the best craft beer offerings from member-brewers. Given the time of year, a number of special seasonal and Oktoberfest varieties will likely be included. Food trucks will also be on hand.

The Mash also affords an opportunity to meet brewers, owners and brewery staff in a festive setting away from their home breweries.

Tickets are available at ocbrewers.org. The festival sold to capacity when last held, so the OC Brewers Guild recommends securing your tickets before it's too late. OC Brewers Mash, Saturday, October 29th.

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



OC Brewers Mash

Photo Credit: MJ Doddridge



OC Brewers Mash

Photo Credit: David Mulvihill



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CLASSIC CRAFT MEETS MODERN TASTE

by Eric Brummell

Oktoberfest season is here, which means it's time to crush some delicious German beer. While lighter, softer *Oktoberfestbiers* are popular this time of year and authentic in their own right, the *Märzenbier* (Marzen) dates back to the 1841 Oktoberfest in Munich.

Marzen, which means “March” in German, gets its name from the time of year the beer was traditionally brewed. Why brew beer in spring only to drink it in fall? As you might imagine, microbiology was not very well understood in the 1500s. It was during this time that the Bavarian ruler Duke Albrecht V outlawed brewing beer between late April and late September to prevent the observed—but not quite understood—spoilage of beer. Today, we know this spoilage was caused by bacteria festering in early brewing equipment due to the seasonal rise in temperature. However, as we can all appreciate, five months without beer

is five months too long! As a result, Bavarian brewers put the paddle to the tun to make enough beer until fall and stored the barrels in cool, dark caves to wait out the heat of summer.

As an official style, Marzen came on the scene when it was introduced at the 1841 Oktoberfest in Munich, long before today's lighter fest styles. We argue, therefore, that Marzen is a more traditional Oktoberfest beer than today's Oktoberfestbier.

But again, we ask, who can stand to wait five months for beer?

Not us. Enter Route 30 Brewing's *Crushtoberfest*.

This year marks our 6th year brewing our beloved Marzen beer. When we first started out as microbrewers, our access to industry-level technology was limited. Despite not having the proper equipment, we were determined to brew a Marzen. On our first attempt



Tom and Eric at Route 30 on opening day

Photo Credit: Alexandra Chrystal

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we opted to use a Kolsch yeast because we didn't have proper temperature control. (We didn't want to end up with spoiled beer like the medieval brewers, after all.) Kolsch yeast does well in an environment with ambient temperature, so we figured we'd give it a pitch.

The result? Honestly, it was clean and delicious. The Kolsch yeast did a pretty solid job of creating a Marzen-style beer and it was a hit with our customers.

Regardless, the next year we opted to up our game thanks to improvements in equipment and yeast cultivation, as well as lots of lessons learned. We used a well-known yeast strain from the oldest operating brewery in the world, which just so happens to be in Bavaria! What's special about this yeast is that—even though it's a bottom-fermenting yeast—it can ferment at top-fermenting temperatures. Traditional bottom-fermenting lager yeasts are time-intensive and produce a significant amount of sulfur. This unique yeast ferments at ale temperature, with hardly any esters, at a third of the time.

Now, here's where things may get contentious. Remember when we said we didn't want to wait five months for beer? Well, we don't. We fast-lager our beer and we know, we know; you're probably saying to yourself, "that's any oxymoron!" Well, maybe. After all, the German word "lager" translates to "storage" or "stock" and, as mentioned, medieval brewers began storing their beer in cool, dark caves during the summer months as a means to keep it from spoiling. However, they stored beer out of necessity, showcasing human ingenuity and scientific acumen in the process.

Since then, the lager method has come to denote beer made with bottom-fermenting yeast and brewers across the globe continue to utilize groundbreaking brewing technology and advancements in yeast cultivation to improve the quality, taste, and shelf-life. In fact, in a study comparing this method to the traditional lager method it was determined that the only distinguishing factor is a perceived difference in bitterness.

So while some folks might not consider a fast-lager a traditional Marzen, we're not bitter. Like all good brewers, we've learned how to adjust our recipes to account for the added bitterness and, honestly, it's our favorite beer to make. As a result, our deep amber Crushtoberfest boasts a "just right" balance of clean hop bitterness and hints of lightly toasted bread and caramel.

This year's batch of Crushtoberfest is canned and ready to be crushed. Just like its label, this beer pays homage to the history of Oktoberfest and is a celebration of everything we, at Route 30, love. Sure, our brewery and taproom locations have everything from IPAs to sours, but this is a beer rooted in tradition you can savor.

We think the Bavarian brewers of the 1500s would be proud of what we created; a beer where classic craft meets modern taste. We hope you'll give it a try! Prost!

Located in Riverside, CA, Route 30 Brewing Company is owned and operated by long-time friends Eric Brummell and Tom Creely. This article was (obviously) ghostwritten by Eric's loving wife, Alex Chrystal, who has supported Eric and Tom in their beer venture since Route 30 Brewing Company was founded in 2016.



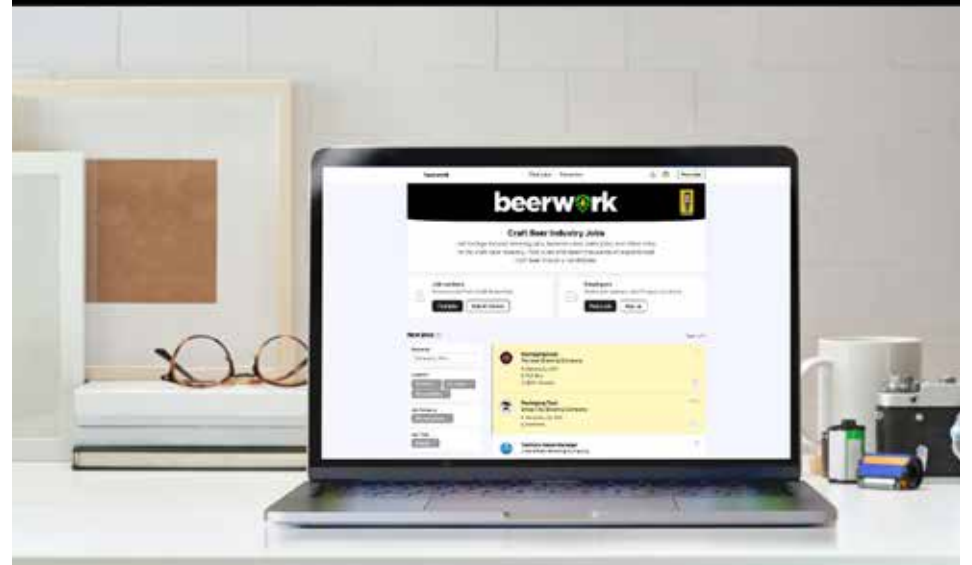
16 oz Crushtoberfest can alongside a 20 oz pour

Photo Credit: Eric Brummell



Tom and Eric in the brewhouse

Photo Credit: Marcos Serna



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REVIEW

THIS CIDER HOUSE RULES

by Daniel Drennon



Stefano Enjem and Joe Farrier

Photo Credit: Sterling Reed

Apparently Joe Farrier and Stefano Enjem were destined to cross paths. Fortunately for us, they were also destined to become the best of pals: co-workers, then neighbors, then (cider) homebrewers, then co-owners of Ficklewood Ciderworks. Two engineers by day, the pair discovered a shared love of cider owing to Farrier suffering from celiac (gluten allergy) and Enjem being diabetic.

Once Farrier bought a house next to Enjem's in Long Beach, the two began homebrewing ciders, even going so far as to put a ladder along the fence of their shared backyards so they could quickly scoot back and forth to foster their crushed-apple creations. Enjem laughs and offers, "It was pretty bad in the beginning. But being engineers, we kept tweaking. It was a couple of years of evolution before it got pretty good."

Their experimentation having evolved into a full-blown passion for the art of cidemaking, the two consulted with Shea A.J. Comfort, aka "The Yeast Whisperer," to dial it up from pretty damn good to pretty damn excellent. It became a goal to share their success with others and the idea for Ficklewood Ciderworks was born.

The two found a spot along the Broadway corridor in downtown Long Beach that had most recently been a Dollar Store and, as far back as the 1930s, it was a Department of Motor Vehicles office. Engaging the help of

local Long Beach artists and designer Jeff Parker, they transformed just another blah building on Broadway into a super cool, artistic, warm, welcoming "we want it to feel like your favorite living room" vibe.

The two hired veteran cidemaker Eric Willms to be their Head Cidemaker and Julie Lotz to be their Front of the House Manager. The dream of Ficklewood had become a reality and opened in February of 2020. I wonder what happened the next month? Oh yeah. A worldwide pandemic.

Talk about one and done. This was one month and done. Like all small businesses, especially those in the alcohol industry, the ensuing two years of moving target regulations, openings and closings, and diminished if not non-existent profits were challenging...to say the least. But two and a half years later, Ficklewood is, if not thriving, an oasis of hope. Hope that artistry and community, especially when in tandem, will always prevail. And now to segue to their ciders, they are the epitome of craftsmanship.

Farrier informs me, "Part of our culture is that everyone (on our staff) works in the cellar to help make cider. It helps our servers better connect our customers with the cider they are drinking through experience and knowledge in the process."

I met Enjem and Farrier at Ficklewood and immediately confessed to being

a one-trick pony beer writer who doesn't know jack shit about cider. My preconceived notions that their ciders would be fruity, juicy or, worst of all, sweet brought smiles to their faces. The two gave me a quick 101 education in the true art of craft cidemaking. That their ciders have much more in common with fine wine, even champagne, than they do with apple juice. In fact, a cidery operates under their permit and licenses as a winery.

Sure enough, as Farrier and Enjem sampled me through their eclectic and extensive list of draft ciders, I was immediately impressed by the same adjectives I use to describe my favorite craft beers: clean, crisp and, yes, dry. They confirmed their biggest challenge in drawing in new cider drinkers is the perception, thanks to swill like Angry Orchard, that ciders are "too sweet." It was my turn to laugh and I suggested that they put a neon sign flashing "It's DRY!!!" on top of their building to be seen by motorists coming down Broadway.

Another revelation is that Ficklewood

ciders are a healthy option, relative to other alcoholic drink choices. Using fresh-crushed apples (never any concentrates nor added sugars), they ferment out all of the sugars so their ciders are low calorie (average 70 per full pour), zero fat and zero sugar. Enjem adds, "We consider our ciders to be a bridge drink. We have choices and flavor options that will appeal to beer, cocktail or wine drinkers." I can attest that I am all three of those and I very much enjoyed the diversity of the ingredients in their expansive draft list. Kudos to Head Cidemaker Eric Willms and I was not surprised even a little bit when the justifiably proud owners informed me that several of their ciders have won awards at the world's most prestigious cider competition held annually in New York.

If you are like me and rarely venture beyond our beloved best-in-the-world California craft beer when thirsty for a delicious beverage, consider expanding your horizons with a delightfully dry cider. And, oh yeah, order a Ficklewood. It's not just any ol' cider. It's an experience.



Eric Willms and Julie Lotz

Photo Credit: Sterling Reed

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