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Taps at Modern Times’ Far West Lounge in Encinitas. The company just joined the list of the top 50 domestic craft breweries by sales volume. Photo by Juan Martinez
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The Brewers Association, a trade group representing American craft brewing companies, releases lists of the top 50 craft breweries and overall breweries in the country, based on beer sales volume. Three San Diego County operations made it onto the craft brewing company list; Stone dropped one spot, Karl Strauss moved up one, and Modern Times is a new addition to this year’s rankings. Here is the list of the country’s top 50 craft breweries.

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<th>Rank</th>
<th>Brewery Name</th>
<th>City, State</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>D. G. Yuengling &amp; Son Inc.</td>
<td>Pottsville, PA</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Boston Beer Co.</td>
<td>Boston, MA</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Sierra Nevada Brewing Co.</td>
<td>Chico, CA</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>New Belgium Brewing Co.</td>
<td>Fort Collins, CO; San Francisco, CA</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Duvel Moortgat - Paso Robles, CA; Kansas City, MO; Cooperstown, NY</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gambrinus - San Antonio, TX; Berkeley, CA; Portland, OR</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bell’s Brewery Inc.</td>
<td>Comstock, MI</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>CANarchy - Longmont, CO; Tampa, FL; Salt Lake City, UT; Comstock, MI; Inglewood, CA; Dallas, TX</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Stone Brewing Co.</td>
<td>Escondido, CA</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Deschutes Brewery</td>
<td>Bend, OR</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Artisanal Brewing Ventures</td>
<td>Downingtown, PA; Lakewood, NY; Brooklyn, NY</td>
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<td>Brooklyn Brewery</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Dogfish Head Craft Brewery</td>
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<td>SweetWater Brewing Co.</td>
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<td>Great Lakes Brewing Co.</td>
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<td>Stevens Point Brewery</td>
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<td>Odell Brewing Co.</td>
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<td>Karl Strauss Brewing Co.</td>
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<td>Full Sail Brewing Co.</td>
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<td>Modern Times Beer - San Diego</td>
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<td>North Coast Brewing Co.</td>
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<td>Bear Republic Brewing Co.</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>Left Hand Brewing Company</td>
<td>Longmont, CO</td>
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*Ranked by sales volume

12 APRIL 2019

Modern Times’ Far West Lounge. Photo by Juan Martinez
Brew Battles are Underway!

Round 1
- Week 1: 2/27 – 2/28
  MadeWest vs. Noble Ale Works
- Week 2: 3/6 – 3/7
  Beach Grease vs. Eppig
- Week 3: 3/13 – 3/14
  El Segundo vs. Smog City
- Week 4: 3/20 – 3/21
  Resident vs. Rip Current
- Week 5: 3/27 – 3/28
  Beachwood vs. Bootlegger
- Week 6: 4/3 – 4/4
  Burning Beard vs. Mikkeller
- Week 7: 4/10 – 4/11
  Chapman vs. Topa Topa
- Week 8: 4/17 – 4/18
  Abnormal vs. Burgeon

Round 2 Begins 5/1
Last Four Begins 6/12
Championship 7/3 – 7/7

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ON A SATURDAY NIGHT in late February, numerous members of QUAFF (QUality Ale and Fermentation Fraternity), San Diego’s oldest homebrew club, gathered at AleSmith Brewing Co to celebrate the club’s 30th Anniversary. It was an appropriate venue for the celebration, as AleSmith was founded by two QUAFF members, Skip Virgilio and Ted Newcomb, and then bought in the early oughts by yet another QUAFF member, current owner Peter Zien.

The club grew out of informal gatherings of homebrewers during the 1980s, whose original connection was through the now long defunct Beer and Wine Crafts (formerly Wine Arts), San Diego’s first homebrew store.

From these humble origins and a handful of members, the club has grown to currently having more than 330 members. Along the way, the club has won the coveted American Homebrewers Association’s Homebrew Club of the Year award on nine occasions, and placed second an additional nine years.

A lot of this growth and success has been witnessed by party attendee and longtime QUAFF member Rich Link, who was San Diego’s first craft beer journalist, reporting on the local scene for a number of years for The Celebrator.

“First of all, wow! It’s crazy when you think back of where we were thirty years ago, and where we are today, it’s amazing,” noted Link. “We were like thirty guys brewing mediocre-to-good beers and now we’ve got hundreds of guys brewing amazing beers and owning breweries. It’s just an incredible scene here in San Diego now, and just amazing to be a part of it.”

The host of the evening AleSmith’s Peter Zien added, “I am honored and thrilled that QUAFF wanted to have their anniversary here. I owe my career to this club, I owe everything to QUAFF. It’s fun to have them in the house.”
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While beer has existed in one form or another for thousands of years, the science behind fermentation somehow eluded mankind for the vast majority of it. Most regarded it as a miracle from God, a blessing to His true believers. There’s no question that beer borders on the divine, but we now know that explanation to be insufficient. The truth is that God has a serious grudge against water and straight up smites it with infection wherever and whenever He can. Nobody knows why. Regardless, courtesy of His oddly limited understanding of biochemistry, humanity eventually discovered yeast and set it to work.

Of course, fermentation wasn’t always about asserting control. Long before White Labs harvested the first crop from their Yeast Vial Bush (I’m a little shaky on the science myself), our interaction with the microbe was far more casual. We would leave mounds of wet grain laying about, like you do, and airborne yeast would happen upon it. I guess you could say it was a... breezy relationship. #UnrepentantDadJoke

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As anyone who has posted a Casual Encounters ad on Craigslist can attest to, this sort of arrangement has the potential for both sublime and horrifying outcomes. Wild yeast are notorious for summoning polarizing flavors and aromas, and inconsistently so at that. That’s part of its raw beauty. Wild fermentation is not some milquetoast, mortgage-paying stiff – it is liquid punk rock. So it should come as no surprise to those that know them that it is the next frontier for Burning Beard Brewing Company.

The idea of starting a wild fermentation program long preceded the brick and mortar of the brewery itself. Per Jeff Wiederkehr, he and Co-Founder Mike Maass were toying with “the silly romantic notion of developing a sort of San Diego terroir” as early as 2012. Terroir, a term typically affixed to the world of wine, is a nod to the distinct environmental factors that contribute to characteristics resident in the grapes. It is often applied in a deterministic fashion (e.g. soil type X + climate type Y = grape type Z), but the “terroir” Wiederkehr references represents more than an equation. It is an open embrace of an unaccountable and largely imperceptible blend of San Diegan microbes in banking they’ll deliver the goods. It’s Burning Beard Brewing Company’s way of saying, “Brettanomyces, take the wheel!”

Of course, trust is better earned than granted. The proof of concept for this program arose through open fermentation experiments in Wiederkehr’s own backyard. The pleasing citrus-like notes and light acidity those brews produced was not only deemed worthy of ushering the endeavor onward, but became the foundation for their first house strain, Brulanta Metio.

Dipping a toe into the spontaneous fermentation waters is certainly interesting, but hardly unprecedented. The real ambition of this project becomes evident when viewing Burning Beard Brewing Company’s brand spanking new koelschip. For those of you that dozed through your high school Flemish lessons, a koelschip (henceforth known by the Anglicized version “coolship”) is a broad vessel into which wort is exposed to open air and left to koel down. Its open top grants access to any microfauna loitering about and invites them to feast on sugar water. This offer is all too seductive for notorious freeloaders like yeast. They settle in and their particular take on fermentation begins.

While the coolship may be eager to embrace a more motley fermentation scene, it’s imperative that their other fermenters don’t follow suit. Core beers prefer their neighborhood to be nice and gentrified. Accordingly, the coolship is housed in an adjacent
facility to the main brewing space. And since it doesn’t have ready access to the eaves and slats that have been wrangling microorganisms from the Senne valley for hundreds of years, the San Diego terroir needs to be cultivated a bit differently.

The coolship itself is more directly enclosed in a specially prepared shack. Its interior is lined with cedar that’s been “painted” with the aforementioned backyard culture. It’s a way of ensuring that Brulanta Metio has an invitation to the party, since Wiederkehr has no intention that it will be hosting the soiree. “The only yeast that we throw directly at the wort is done so by a positive pressure fan that pulls in the night air,” he said.

While the copper tub and wooden walls honor traditional open fermentation practices, there is still some innovation afoot. Staged directly above the tub are a series of dangling wooden dowels. Each has been bludgeoned to weather its exterior, whittled to a stubby point, and soaked in the house strain. As the steam rises from the coolship to meet them again and again they’ll both invite new yeast to take residence in its tiny nooks as well as provide a drippy delivery system for the same back into the wort. And if the whole wild fermentation thing never takes off, they can always be repurposed as the world’s stankiest wind chimes.

In the near term (“near” being relative to the lackadaisical pace at which wild microorganisms tend to work through fermentation), consumers will be able to experience fruited and unfruited exports from the foeder exposed to the backyard yeast in late 2019 into 2020. Following that, there are three recent coolship batches placed in various barrels, each to be released when they have reached their fullest potential. Ultimately, Wiederkehr foresees a program akin to those one would encounter in Brussels itself. “[We’re] applying our local terrior to the template of traditional wild ale styles, like Lambic, Gueuze, and even a Flanders Red,” he said.

Ever since San Diego rose to prominence as a craft brew mecca, the San Diego style has been defined by an unusual concentration of brewing talent and a penchant for amplifying the flavor profile of already hoppy brews. But when you get down to it, all of that is mechanistic; those brewers could move elsewhere, and those hops/malts are largely imported anyways. Nothing specifically roots any of it to our home. In that sense, the coolship program represents the truest measure of our innate worth as a beer capital, because it reflects precisely how this city actually tastes.

San Diego, for the sake of Burning Beard Brewing and our collective reputation, I sure hope we’re delicious. »
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Skip Virgilio has had a front row seat to much of what has transpired in San Diego craft beer's "New Brew Wave" from 1987 to the present day. One of a nascent group of homebrewers in San Diego in the 1990s, Virgilio went on to brew professionally at PB Brewhouse and then to later co-found AleSmith Brewing Company with fellow homebrewer Ted Newcomb in 1995.

In 2002, Skip sold AleSmith to Peter Zien and returned to his original gig as a mortgage broker, and back into the world of homebrewing. After a seventeen year absence from the pro ranks, he has now returned to run the brewery at Whisknladle Hospitality group's new Sorrento Valley eatery and brewery, Gravity Heights.

I recently had a chance to sit down with Skip at Gravity Heights to discuss his new venture and touch on some of his previous adventures in the local craft beer scene.

**SK:** First off, congratulations on Gravity Heights (GH)! Can you tell me about how this project came about, and your involvement in it?

**SV:** I think it was about five years ago when we met at Ryan Trim's house. Ryan has these bottle shares every month or two, and I got invited by one of my friends who I surf with, Danny Singley. Arturo (Kassel, the managing partner and co-founder of the Whisknladle Hospitality group) lives on the same cul-de-sac as Ryan and he was there too. I always brought some homebrew and some old beers from AleSmith to those "shares." Arturo suggested that perhaps we do something together. At the time, I think Arturo had just had his third child and was opening another restaurant, so it (the GH project) got put on the back burner for a while. A couple of years later, he got back in touch and we met at Solana (Beach) Pizza Port for a beer and discussed how it (the GH project) might look, and after that we started poking around for real estate and did some business planning.
**SK:** How were you guys able to raise capital for the GH project?

**SV:** There are five of us who were in on the ground floor at Ryan’s house, including Arturo, Ryan, Chris Maulik, a dentist, and Mike Sherman, another dentist, and me. Chris and Mike didn’t have a lot of time to devote to the project, so they are a smaller piece of the five (founding partners). We raised the money mostly through friends and family, and folks that had invested in some of Arturo’s other restaurants.

**SK:** What do you think about the craft beer market both locally and nationally, and how it’s shifted from the time that you guys decided to start the project some years ago up until GH’s opening?

**SV:** When we first started talking about this or getting serious, maybe three years ago, you know there was certainly talk about when the bubble is going to burst, or when things are going to soften up in San Diego for the craft beer market. I always felt that if you had a restaurant with a great location and a great product, and added a brewery to that, then that could work. I think it is getting more and more difficult to compete for shelf space and for tap handles in bars, and I really didn’t want to go in that direction. So I felt like for our project, timing wasn’t as critical.

**SK:** For now is the goal to have Gravity Heights beers only available here at this location, or are there some possibilities of limited distribution?

**SV:** We’d like to serve most of the beer over the bar to our guests here, but we do have a little extra capacity in the brewery, and so we are starting to talk to select draft accounts. So I think we’ll be on tap at some places around town.

**SK:** So no packaged product at this juncture?

**SV:** Right now we are doing crowlers and growlers, and we hope to do cans at some point.
SK: So earlier on, before we started the formal part of this interview, we were catching up with some of what I’ve been up to recently, and I showed you some video which included a picture of British beer historian Michael Jackson, and you mentioned something interesting…

SV: It had never occurred to me until seeing your Ron Pattinson video that the Michael Jackson book *The World Guide to Beer* was an early influence for me. One of my closest high school friends and neighbor had the book on a coffee table. I used to flip through it and read about all the wonderful beers Michael Jackson featured. Later, when I started homebrewing and reading everything I could get a hold of, I remembered the book, and it became one of the early additions to my brewing library.

SK: So what actually got you started on the craft beer trail? What was your motivation to become a brewer?

SV: I had always been interested in beer other than Bud, Miller, Coors — not that I didn’t drink my fair share of those too! I was always seeking out other beers, at the time that there was no craft (beer), but there were import beers and things like that. I was in the mortgage business for a number of years, and a couple of my friends from Orange County had moved to Palo Alto, and some other friends lived in Seattle. I’d just kind of gotten burnt out on the mortgage business and decided to take a road trip, so I drove to Palo Alto and my friends Ed and Dave Miner took me to Gordon Biersch’s (first) brewpub in Palo Alto.

There were a couple of other craft beers that I had sampled before: Sierra Nevada, Saint Stan’s, and Anchor, but that was about it before I took that trip out of Orange County. I pressed on to Seattle to visit some other friends there. They introduced me to ale houses that might have had ten different beers from ten different breweries that I’d never heard of or knew existed. The beers were different and flavorful. I got really excited about it (brewing) and I decided at that time I was going to learn to make beer, so I went to the University of Washington bookstore...
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Founders Skip Virgilio and Ted Newcomb
and poked around over there and found some books on homebrewing. I bought two or three of them, and then headed back home, to the City of Orange at the time, and when I got back home I found that there was a homebrew store within a mile of where I was living called Fun Fermentations. Then I joined the homebrew club that was based out of there called Barley Bandits. I later moved to Valencia, California, and at that time I joined the Maltose Falcons (homebrew club).

SK: So then the move to San Diego, right?

SV: That was in the spring of 1990. I was living in an apartment over a garage in the Village of Carlsbad and homebrewing there for about a year and a half. I think I joined QUAFF (Quality Ale and Fermentation Fraternity homebrew club) in 1990 or 1991. There were times when there were only four or five of us meeting at the old Callahan's in Mira Mesa. (Author's note: QUAFF now has more than 330 members, and monthly meetings with more than 50 in attendance are not uncommon).

SK: I don’t know if the local casual craft drinker understands the strong connection between home and pro brewers in San Diego. Care to comment?

SV: Yeah, it’s kind of interesting… sometimes it seems like there’s a disconnect between homebrewers and craft (pro) brewers, which I never really understood, and I think it is really more on the craft (pro) brewers side… you know, thinking that homebrewers are amateurs and whatever, and that they don’t really get it. But the reality for me is that homebrewers are the ones doing all the innovation, and that is moving into the craft (pro) beer side. I have a tremendous amount of respect for homebrewers and all the clubs that I was a member of, and other clubs in the area that I am aware of. They are just really enthusiastic and committed to their hobby, and the amount of research that they do and the exchange of ideas is really amazing.

SK: I am not sure if many people, especially the younger folk, are aware that in 1994 you were the very first winner of a Great American Beer Festival (GABF) medal in San Diego County, and a gold one to boot. Share a little about that adventure.

SV: I was at the PB Brewhouse (now defunct; where the Skechers shoe store in PB is currently located) from October of ’92. I took over from Clint Stromberg, who was the brewer there prior to me. I brewed there until closing day, which was Halloween 1995. I got interested in Belgian styles from brewing with a friend, Dale Gates, in Orange County, so I decided to give it a shot at the PB Brewhouse. I think it (a Belgian golden strong) was the first commercially brewed Belgian-style beer in San Diego. We went to the GABF with a number of beers entered, and the awards had been called for all the other beers except for the Belgian strong ale category, and I was thinking, ‘well, it’s not going to happen this year,’ so they call the bronze and the silver and I’m thinking, ‘I guess I’m going home-empty handed,’ and then they called PB Brewhouse (for the gold)… I was completely blown away, I was so excited.

SK: When I interviewed Rich Link for SUDS COUNTY, USA he said that your GABF win got a whole lot of the local homebrewing community interested in brewing Belgian styles, and Vinnie Cilurzo of Russian River said about your win that “to me, that was a huge deal, that was such a giant thing to see Skip win a gold medal at the Great American Beer Festival,” so clearly you helped inspire some local brewers and the impact was beyond just winning a medal.

SV: I’d never heard that before… it’s an honor that I inspired Vinnie to do anything!

SK: That said, you have also mentioned in prior interviews that the GABF gold medal “did not make the cash register ring,” and a year or so later PB Brewhouse closed for good. Take us back to running and trying to sustain a craft (or then, “micro”) brewery in San Diego in those days.

SV: It was tough. There was a small group of really enthusiastic folks that were interested in craft beer, but it was pretty tight-knit and small, and by no means mainstream like it is today. So even though we won that medal, and got some press interested, and some new visitors that were interested in checking us out…

SK: But obviously not enough business to sustain the brewpub and keep the investors happy, which as mentioned led to its closing in October of 1995, and then led you to co-found AleSmith with Ted Newcomb. Let’s talk about the beers you brewed at AleSmith when you and Ted started the brewery in ’95.

SV: Well, the first beer that we brewed was AleSmith ESB, or Anvil Ale, and that was because Ted just loved Fuller’s ESB. The (personal) focus for me was more West Coast-style beers, with the exception of the Belgian strong ale. I loved the West Coast-style beers, but it felt like time to do something else, and that people will be interested in having another angle to their beer arsenal, so we decided to focus more on European-ish beers like ESB and Belgian stuff, and we planned on doing some Continental-style beers. We soon found out that all anybody wanted at that time was West Coast-style IPAs and other West Coast-style beers. So I was completely wrong on that! But we had committed to making the ESB as our first beer and it was a tough sell. We kept plugging away at it; it was the only beer we made for the first six months, and then we started introducing other styles.

SK: I am aware that one of your first AleSmith employees, Tod Fitzsimmons, who is still employed at AleSmith, named one of the early AleSmith IPAs the Irie Pirate Ale. It was one of the early commercially available local IPAs. Tell us how that went down.

SV: We started with YuleSmith — that was our Christmas beer — which started off as an English double IPA and then over time became a West Coast-style single IPA. I can’t remember if we called it AleSmith IPA or at that time Irie Pirate Ale, a name that Tod Fitzsimmons came up with — kind of a fun name. So we were running with that until I got a cease and desist letter from Global Beer Network, who were importing Piraat, a Belgian strong pale ale, and a few other beers at the time. They said that Irie Pirate Ale was too close to Piraat, but we didn’t have the money to fight it, and so that became the AleSmith IPA.

SK: Interestingly, Pat McIlhenney started up Alpine Beer Company at AleSmith.

SV: I guess I originally met Pat through QUAFF. He was thinking
about starting a brewery but still working as a firefighter. He started doing some volunteer work for us and he was a really hard worker; he really, really helped us out a lot. Then we started talking about how he wanted to make Alpine Beer Co “real” and he didn’t have a brewery in Alpine, but he wanted to start making this beer so we agreed to let him use our equipment when it was idle. I think he had his own fermenters and secondaries (tanks). So he would come in and use our brewhouse, produce his wort and ferment it on our premises, but it was really his deal, a little different from a typical contract brew. Pat was doing all the work and producing his beer at our facility, then he would load up his truck and take it to accounts. O’Brien’s was one of his great accounts. It was mostly Pure Hoppiness and also McIlhenney’s Irish Red Ale.

**SK:** As I understand it, your co-founder at AleSmith was bought out fairly early in the game, and you sold the business to Peter Zien in 2002.

**SV:** Ted said he wanted out about a year and a half after we started AleSmith if I recall correctly. One of my oldest and dearest friends, Dave Miner, and his parents (R.I.P.), who own and operate the Miner Family Winery in the Oakville area of the Napa Valley, bought Ted’s interest in AleSmith, so I was the sole operator, but not the sole owner. The business side of AleSmith was a struggle from day one. We had a few glimpses of the break-even line, but every time we got close, more equipment was needed to fuel our slow growth. I was often more focused on minimizing losses until we could find a direction that would lead to sustainability, instead of financing growth.

On the personal side, my wife Merry and I had two young kids who were often asleep when I left for, and returned from, work. It was difficult to throw in the towel, but Peter and his team have done a wonderful job with AleSmith, including expanding on the beer ethos Ted and I founded the company on. I’m thankful that it didn’t fail outright and it was bought by someone who is committed to making excellent craft beer.

**SK:** Let’s talk newer styles. What’s your take on hazy IPAs, milkshake IPAs, and brut IPAs?

**SV:** Well, we brew a couple of hazies here — a hazy IPA and a hazy pale (ale). I was very resistant to the idea at first, especially when I saw the video of Heady Topper (John Kimmich) making an argument for drinking IPA out of a can… (said with a chuckle). I think that was a setback for me in my willingness to consider hazy IPAs worthy of brewing and drinking, but then my partner Ryan Trim (influenced me), and another friend, James Lombard, well he started bringing me hazies from the East Coast — some of the nicer ones from Treehouse, Trillium, and Hill Farmstead — and so I got exposed to some good and fresh ones, and it turned me around. I tend to drink more West Coast-style IPAs, maybe 10 to 1 versus hazies, but the hazy IPA has grown on me, so yeah, I really got turned around on those. I have an open mind on milkshake IPA and brut IPA, but I haven’t had one of either yet that made me feel like I need to brew one, or come back and have the same beer again. I’m a little skeptical, but willing to be proven wrong.

**SK:** These days, which of the newer local breweries do you find interesting and have helped inspire you to get back in the “game”?

**SV:** The guys at Societe, Burning Beard, Eppig, and Burgeon are making great beers. I am sure there are more that I am missing, but that’s a start anyway.

**SK:** One last question. Given what you have observed in the San Diego craft beer scene over the decades, what is your advice to homebrewers thinking of turning pro and/or hanging out their own shingle?

**SV:** Location, business model, and entrepreneurial talent are becoming more and more important as the market for craft beer becomes more competitive. I’m as guilty as the next successful homebrewer of the “build it and they will come” mindset. Make sure your business model works for your market, you pick a good location, and you either possess or partner with someone with strong business skills and talent.
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I’ve never worked in a brewhouse, but I know a little bit about what it takes to work in one. (Clean, pour some grain, clean, open a valve, clean, stir the mash, clean, and so on.)

But before I spoke to Stina O’Grady — I’d call her Christina, but no one else seems to — I had absolutely no idea what her title of Draught System Tech at Burning Beard Brewing meant. Turns out, it means she’s kind of a wizard.

There are a million things that can screw up a perfectly good beer between keg and glass. Mineral buildup, mold, weird yeast... it seriously might be an actual million. Her job is to make sure every single one of those potential disasters doesn’t happen.

“[My job] is basically making sure that the draft system is working optimally: that it’s balanced, it’s clean, it’s pouring beer properly, all the beer tastes how it’s supposed to taste,” explains O’Grady. “Every two weeks I come in and clean the lines, then the alternate week when I’m not cleaning lines, I take apart all the faucets and clean those and make sure everything is functioning properly.”

It’s a seriously underrated position, without the fame of a brewer or pizzazz of a beertender. But she doesn’t mind the back-of-house lifestyle.

“I never had any idea that I’d be interested in draught systems until I took Michael Peacock’s class at SDSU. I’ve been leaning towards doing more things like that.”

At a brewery Burning Beard’s size, escaping the front-of-house entirely is pretty much impossible. O’Grady also works as a beertender and maintains the keg, glassware, and merch inventories. But the often meticulous nature of keeping the sacred draught system in perfect order appeals to her technical sensibilities. After all, she worked for nearly a decade as a medical researcher before making the move into craft beer three and a half years ago.
“Originally, I was going to try to see if there was some way to take the science and put it towards beer,” she explains as she sips a Normcore pilsner. She stumbled upon the Business of Craft Beer program at SDSU and thought “that would be cool, but how would I apply any of this to any of that?”

She didn’t figure it out. But she enrolled anyway and her passion for craft beer ignited.

“I didn’t really know what I was getting into,” she laughs. “I didn’t know a lot about craft beer. I just drank Guinness and Newcastle all the time.”

Her first gig in San Diego beer was as a beertender at Intergalactic Brewing Company. It was there where she first got a taste of draught system maintenance, ultimately becoming the tasting room manager. But after two years, rumors of Intergalactic’s demise got a little more real, and O’Grady pulled what she calls her “Hail Mary” by cold-sending her resume to Shannon Lynette, Burning Beard’s tasting room manager.

“A month and a half later I got a phone call from her saying, ‘hey, do you still want to work here?’”

Since then, she’s enjoyed what she describes as “more focus on beer education” in the craft beer industry.

“There are more and more Cicerones, more and more BJCP judges and I think that’s super rad. The more educated you are, obviously the better at your job you are and then the more educated the customers become, because you can impart that education onto them.”

Burning Beard is specifically known for emphasizing customer education, an initiative spearheaded by Lynette. O’Grady lists her as one of her role models in the industry, along with people like SDSU instructors Michael Peacock, George Thornton, and Jake Nunes.

But even with a support system like that, she’s (rightfully) a little nervous about the future.

“It’s been kind of scary lately because of the recent closures that came out of seemingly nowhere. I just hope that neighborhood breweries like this one are able to continue to thrive and bring in locals,” citing the increased priority of geographic proximity for craft beer consumers.

But overall, O’Grady’s pretty confident in the future of #SDbeer.

“I feel as long as the industry remains as collaborative and friendly as it has been — which is the main reason I wanted to get into it in the first place — we’ll be okay.”

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In the vast pantheon of household name San Diego beers, few if any embody the commitment, patience, knowhow and effort of Duck Duck Gooze. One of the pristine white whales bred at The Lost Abbey’s barrel warehouse in San Marcos, it only surfaces every three or four years, bringing with it great anticipation among fans of sour beer.

Based loosely on the Belgian style of beer known as gueuze – a blending of different spontaneously-fermented lambic beers aged up to three years – each vintage of Duck Duck Gooze combines various blond, non-fruited, barrel-aged sour ales from The Lost Abbey’s robust inventory. Historically, the majority of the beer has not undergone spontaneous fermentation, though the most recent vintage utilized beer that had received such influence from airborne microorganisms.

To date, three vintages of Duck Duck Gooze have been released: in 2009, 2013, and 2016. The 2019 edition will go on sale via online platform Eventbrite at noon on April 15, with an indoor-outdoor pick-up festival taking place from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the brewery on May 10 and 11.

With this momentous occasion on the horizon, it seemed the perfect time to delve into the art and science behind this storied labor of love with The Lost Abbey director of brewery operations, Tomme Arthur.

“Duck Duck Gooze was something that had been in the business plan since The Lost Abbey’s earliest days,” says Arthur. “I knew I wanted to make a blond, non-fruit sour ale, and the bulk of the ones being made in Belgium were gueuze-style beers, so it seemed fitting. While a very large task, it also gave us time once we opened the brewery (in 2006) to put some barrels aside and really focus on the 2009 release being something special.”

And it was. The inaugural vintage of...
Duck Duck Gooze earned a gold medal in the Belgian-Style Lambic or Sour Ale category at the 2009 Great American Beer Festival (GABF). At the time, the popularity of sour beers was on the rise but early in its development; only a thin sliver of the beer-drinking population knew what a gueuze was, and even fewer had sampled Belgian examples of the funky, mineralic, horse-blankety style, much less one crafted stateside. While not 100% to-style, Duck Duck Gooze became a benchmark beer and an instant cult-classic, and the lore and fanfare behind it have only increased with each subsequent release. Interest in the upcoming vintage is at an all-time high, thanks in part to the 2016 iteration taking a silver in the Wood- and Barrel-Aged Sour Beer category at last year’s GABF.

While Arthur says he did not seek out the advice of Old World gueuze practitioners when tackling Duck Duck Gooze, primarily because of such brewers’ distaste for New World producers co-opting their names and methodologies without respect to provenance, he did receive both advice and encouragement from Jean Van Roy, the owner, brewer, and blender from Brussels’ famed lambic brewery Cantillon. As for research, Arthur cites being fortunate enough to sample young lambics that were less than six months old on several occasions, which he says was “eye-opening.” So, too, was examining the evolution that takes place with lambics and gueuzes care of in-bottle refermentation.

Armed with a palate developed by first-hand sampling and a vision for what he wanted Duck Duck Gooze to be, Arthur quietly embarked on his first three-year journey, keeping a tight lid on the project over that span. His goal was not to create a traditional blend of lambics, and he has always been careful not to describe the beer as a gueuze, but rather to craft a blend of beers aged in oak for various lengths of time, which would illustrate the beauty that can be achieved through the careful, thoughtful combination of complementary barrel-matured stock.

“2009 was our first attempt at blending beers that were up to three years old. Learning how to work with the different acids — especially some of the more acidic and acetic ones — was a learning experience for sure,” says Arthur.

“When the beer was young, it was quite brash. Now that it has had a chance to age gracefully, it still shows that youthful exuberance, albeit a bit mellower. In 2013, we worked to showcase more of the middle-cut barrels. Eighteen-month-old beer made up a large part of that blend. The 2016 blend was probably the most fun of the bunch. We started with more than 100 barrels and were able to incorporate some spontaneously-fermented beer for the first time. When the beer was released, I had full confidence it was going to be an amazing finished beer, though in reality it took an extra three-to-six months for the bottles to really integrate and hit their stride.”

While traditional gueuze blends different vintages of a single base beer, Arthur believes that were it not for having so many different blond base beers to select from, Duck Duck Gooze wouldn’t be as good or complex as it is.

“I believe each batch so far has contained at a minimum three different base beers and they are never blended in exacting ratios. The goal is always to create a range of acids for us to work with. What works best for us is to sample all of the blond, sour, non-fruited barrels we have in our world and build from a base stock once we understand how they are behaving,” he says. “All told, in 2016 we sampled nearly 100 different barrels before settling on 50 that we then used.”

At times, even the complicated aging and production processes have proven the easier part of the Duck Duck Gooze equation. The fervor of beer fans to procure bottles of this rare gem has made the practice of selling it extremely difficult. To avoid massive lines and the potential for not rewarding a long wait with a bottle, The Lost Abbey long ago opted to go the online sales route. This method famously backfired on the company in 2013 and 2016, when online sales platforms were ill-equipped to deal with the massive thrush of online customers and went down.

“Anytime you combine large crowds with alcohol, there will be challenges,” says Adam Martinez, director of marketing and coordinator of Duck Duck Gooze sales since 2013. “Our problems with this beer have always been with one-sale execution. We rely on third-party vendors to sell the beer on their platforms. When something goes wrong with those platforms, we’re pretty much stuck twiddling our thumbs waiting to be told when we can sell beer. We’ll continue to strive to alleviate the pains of the purchasing process, making it as easy as possible to get beers in peoples’ hands.”

Both Martinez and Arthur breathe sighs of relief once sales are complete, with the former seeing the opportunity to even out the almost inevitable online sales hiccups by exceeding expectations once transactions have all been finalized.

“One big positive about a release like this is the clientele is on a different plane than your typical beer fest. They’re more interested in sampling beers versus chugging them, so probably the biggest challenge is creating the right experience for people that visit us to pick up their bottles. With so many awesome beer fests around the country, creating something new and different with people walking away feeling like they just enjoyed a unique event is getting harder and harder, but we’re up for the challenge.”

Enter this May’s pickup party — in addition to being able to sample Duck Duck Gooze under the San Diego sun, The Lost Abbey will have various games and activities, including axe throwing. New gear and glassware will also make its debut and, according to Martinez, “there may even be a sighting of the elusive Green Duck Duck.” Unfamiliar with that tiny character in the legend of this storied beer? This may just be your chance to remedy that.
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In 2013, Josh Landan assembled a team of high-profile investors from the action-sports world to fund Saint Archer Brewery. A little over two years in, Big Beer (MillerCoors) came knocking with a multimillion-dollar offer members of that contingent were eager to snap up. The company sold and, eventually, Landan left the business. Recently, he returned to the scene with Harland Brewing and Scout Distribution. We caught up with Landan to ask him about both interests, starting with his second foray into the brewing industry.

**What inspired you to get back into the beer industry?**

I just missed it. I missed going into a bar and drinking our beer, and the community of it. I was at Blind Burro the other day and had a pint with the owner. I missed that — that building something that’s so tangible. Saint Archer was a crazy, two-and-a-half-year ride. It was a blur keeping up with it. Anytime you go that fast in that short of a period, you don’t get a chance to take it all in. I was gone from the scene for a year and a half just processing it and settling it in my head, because it was hard. I think I had to go through something like that to realize that what I really enjoy is starting something with friends and doing it ourselves, not doing it then living in corporate America. Doing that [after selling Saint Archer] was the death of me, but you never know until you do it. There are some great people still there and doing good work in that environment, but there were a lot of people with a lot of opinions and when you feel like your track record speaks for itself — we built the small brewery and know what it’s like to sell beer on the street as a small craft brewery — and then there are opinions that are opposite of ours... I don’t want to have conversations like that anymore. It’s a comfortable life just working there and that’s that, but I’ve never been one for the comfortable. So, I thought, ‘Why not start over? Why not throw in wine and a distributorship this time?’ [laughs] This time around, I’m not worried about selling beer in Portland, Las Vegas, or Arizona. I don’t have the capacity for that anymore. I’d rather do it all here and wherever we go in the county we can have one.

**What are your plans for your headquarters in Scripps Ranch?**

The entire building is 37,000 square feet. One side and 20,000 square feet of it is for Harland and the other side is for Scout Distribution. Harland’s tasting room will be on the west side of the building. On the brewery side, we have a 30-barrel Premier Stainless brewhouse. We’ve done everything with [Premier owner] Rob Soltys in the past, so it was seamless. We’re excited to be in Scripps Ranch. I wanted to be in a community, not some place like Miramar. Who is going to Miramar? There’s something to be said for all the families living around us in Scripps Ranch, not to mention having our distribution client, JuneShine, down the street at Ballast Point Brewing’s old brewery, and Newtopia Cyder close by. It’s way better than some faceless business park like we had at Saint Archer. That was a bummer.

**In addition to Scripps Ranch, you have a tasting room on the way at One Paseo in Del Mar. Why did you select that location?**

It will have a built-in customer base. Right behind our 3,200-square-foot tasting room there’ll be 608 luxury apartments that are already 90% occupied, even though they haven’t yet been built. Next to us will be 1,200 office units, and the first thing they will see when they leave work will be Harland. It’s where One Paseo starts for them. The feel of our tasting room will be very masculine with black hardwood floors. I grew up in Ventura on motorcycles. It’s the culture I’ve always been around — blue collar and rough around the edges — Harland speaks to that... admittedly in a little bit nicer way in Del Mar.

**Do you have plans for future growth?**

We’re not so much about special events as just being a good everyday place to enjoy beer.
satellite locations?
I’d love to put something in Oceanside. It just feels so much like my hometown. I think it’s one of the most comfortable communities.

We’re also in negotiations with the Marriott Marquis San Diego downtown on a bar at the hotel. There’s never been a tasting room in a downtown hotel before. The idea is that you walk up to the building or through the lobby and, instead of getting a coffee at a Starbucks you can get a beer. Lots of downtown bars aren’t stoked on that but being at a hotel and taking a 16-ounce can to your room, well, that doesn’t sound too bad to me.

Who’s brewing Harland beer and what will your portfolio include?
We’ve made it through the first three months with one beer, our IPA. But we have a lot in store and it will all be brewed by Nick Marron. He is our director of brewery operations and was director of brewing at Saint Archer. For now, he has been contract brewing at Bitter Brothers Brewing and Mission Brewery, where we produced our Mexican lager. It’s amazing how many breweries are willing to contract brew these days. Our can releases will include a hazy IPA with Azacca and Citra hops, a passion-fruit kettle sour, and sour IPA. We’ll also offer a rotating series of hazy IPAs with choice hops like Strata, Mosaic, and Nelson. Our brewery-only specialty releases will include a pair of sour milkshake IPAs, and several kettle sours including Boysenberry Pie with boysenberries, vanilla, nutmeg, and graham cracker. We’ll have an unfiltered Kellerpils, brown ale with maple and coconut, and a pair of pastry stouts, including one with Mostra Coffee.

How much beer do you think Harland is capable of producing?
I think you can sell 10,000-plus barrels, and we’ll be looking to do that in San Diego. We’re not really looking to go beyond the county. Of course, we will send beer to Ventura at some point.

Regarding your distribution company, what niche is Scout looking to fill in San Diego’s already-crowded beer and beverage landscape?
I didn’t come from beer. I’m not a brewer and have no family or friends in the beer business. Growing up in Ventura, beer was Coors Light and Bud Light, and at best, you have a friend who works at a beer distributor warehouse. I didn’t know anybody when I got into the beer business. When I started Saint Archer, we met with Stone Distributing Company and everything (Stone co-founder) Steve Wagner would tell me was like getting lessons at beer college. I didn’t know anything, and if it hadn’t been for that relationship, it would have been very hard in the beginning for me to understand what was going on. Stone gave me a valuable intro to how distribution works, which is not common for a beer distributor. It was more personable and they gave me a lot of access; a lot more there than your traditional Bud or MillerCoors house. Later, I was introduced to distributorships all over the country. Those don’t feel like partnerships. They’re just taking your beer places. They’re not getting into sales strategy and how to build your brand in the marketplace, or asking you how your capital raises are going. I wondered, ‘How come nobody asks that or gives a shit?’ That’s where Scout was born from. We can look the guys at JuneShine in the eye and be like, ‘I’ve been you, I know exactly what it’s like to be you and not know how to raise money or what to do with your brand or what pricing structure to use.’ I think that’s what’s been refreshing for the brands Scout represents. They’re left thinking, ‘These dudes really get us and understand.’ It’s been pretty special helping people because we do know what it’s like to start up, ramp up, and try to keep up with the different phases of a company’s growth. It’s not just, ‘Let me take your beer downtown to the Pendry.’ It’s, ‘Let me tell you how to get it there and save you money doing so.’ It’s crazy how many breweries just don’t know.

Who are Scout’s current clients, and are you looking to add more brands?
We currently distribute beer for 32 North Brewing, Abnormal Beer Co., Harland Brewing, Ogopogo Brewing, and Topa Topa Brewing; cider for Bivouac Ciderworks; wine for Claxton Cellars; and hard kombucha for JuneShine. Other brands have reached out — some would be a surprise to people — and we get hit up multiple times a week from alcohol businesses all over the U.S. Having the film we produced for JuneShine turned some heads. That’s not common for a distributor. But for now, we’re standing pat with who we have.
What do you look for when taking on distribution partners?

The product is always number one. You could have the best brand on the planet with $100 million to spend, but if your beer sucks, it doesn’t matter. We also like getting a feel for the people. We have met with some folks where, personally, it wasn’t the right fit. That’s important. You’re entering into a marriage and getting divorced is really expensive, so I think you really need to like each other. That’s been a big thing for us. We’re really building brands with these people. You get to a point where self-distributing is gnarly. You spend a lot, wake up and wonder if you’re still a brewery or producer or if you’ve turned into a distribution business. You have to think of scaling. You don’t know about getting into chains and who to talk to. If you’re just getting by with your brewery, how are you going to finance the distribution arm of your business? It’s very sensitive; someone’s handing over their kid. We’re trusting our clients to grow this business with us, but also for us because we won’t be on the street selling together.

What are Scout’s current resources?

Scout is headquartered along with Harland Brewing in Scripps Ranch. Scout occupies 17,000 square feet of a 37,000-square-foot facility. We were originally going to have both businesses split a 17,000-square-foot building, but it’s a good thing we didn’t. It wouldn’t have worked out. We originally built a 3,000-square-foot cold box for our distributed brands, but things have gone so well that we’re out of space and constructing a 1,000-square-foot cold box. Similarly, we started out with two delivery trucks and are already up to four. Scout is already servicing over 800 San Diego County accounts after four months. It speaks to our veteran squad and the relationships they have forged over the years. That's what really sells beer. You have to have people that have been local San Diegans for 15 years, people that bleed SD craft beer through and through. If you don’t, it’s really tough. And if you can convince people like that to jump into the deep end with you, you’re stoked! ¶
When asked what inspired San Diego’s most successful restaurateurs to take over Mission Beach’s Coaster Saloon, reps from the Cohn Restaurant Group reply, “Location, location, location.” Not only did CRG nab an indoor-outdoor bar and resto adjacent to the beach, boardwalk, and Belmont Park (as well as three upstairs suites), they also inherited 40 taps ripe for dispensing craft beer.

A mainstay on Ventura Place for roughly three-and-a-half decades, beer in great abundance has been the venue’s calling card for many years. Early on, its suds-saturation was a bit gimmicky, driving patrons to check out a variety of microbrews and imports a la The Yard House, but in recent years, former co-owner Darren Renna went all-in with draft craft offerings, reaching out to local breweries to showcase their wares.

Under CRG, San Diego craft remains at the forefront, including a number of independent operations intermingled with macro-owned brands and a few American-adjunct offerings for the non-artisanal minded. Though some tourists order one of the latter for their first drink, after having the lore of local brewing shared with them, they tend to switch over to a pint or flight of something from San Diego.

Beverage manager Sabrina Nowatnick sees having a variety of offerings—everything from kettle-sours and blondes to IPAs, ambers and brown ales—as a key to conversion. Expecting craft beer first-timers to latch on to a hometown hop-bomb is a bit far-fetched, so gateway beers play a big role. And so does those beers’ compatibility with down-home barbecue, which is the name of the game at CRG’s reimagined version of the Coaster.

Executive chef Tim Eylens presents a menu stocked to the gills with slow-smoked meats like classic Texas beef brisket, pulled pork, or baby back ribs (and sides of spare ribs at a discount on Thursday nights). Some of those succulent proteins find their way onto appetizers like garbage fries with pulled pork, pickled veg, and barbecue sauce, or sandwiches like the “Big O” with brisket, caramelized onions, whole-grain mustard aioli, Havarti and Swiss cheese on thick, golden-brown Texas toast.

With the savory meatiness of the above offerings, coupled with earthy spices, chilis, and barbecue-sauce sweetness, red ales like Karl Strauss’ time-tested Red Trolley Ale, or roasty selections like New English’s Brewer’s Special Brown Ale are couplings you can count on. For those looking to counter the fatty, sugary aspects of those dishes or amplify their spiciness, a dry, heavily-hopped West Coast IPA is the way to go.

And like any BBQ joint worth its salt (or custom dry-rub blend), Coaster Saloon features a host of diverse yet equally decadent sides, from bacon-studded potato salad to creamy macaroni and cheese with a crispy Panko crust, coleslaw, baked beans, and some of the best stewed collard greens on this side of the Mississippi.

Chef Eylens has shared the recipe for two of these supporting cast members, as well as his smoked baby back ribs, but also invites you to save some work by coming straight to the source where you can ride the Giant Dipper or take a dip in the Pacific before dipping some slow-smoked meats in a cup of his special barbecue sauce.
Baby Back Ribs
Yield: 6 to 8 servings
Paired with Karl Strauss Red Trolley Ale

½ lb brown sugar
2 oz chili powder
2 oz granulated garlic
2 oz paprika
1 oz black pepper
1 oz cumin
1 oz onion powder
1 oz salt
½ oz cayenne pepper
2 racks baby back pork ribs, membrane removed from backside
Bacon Potato Salad (recipe follows)
Collard Greens (recipe follows)

Combine the spices and coat the ribs with the spice rub. Wrap the ribs in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 1-2 hours. Prepare an outdoor or stovetop smoker per manufacturer’s specifications and smoke using your favorite wood or pellets until the meat begins to pull back from the rib bones, 4½-5 hours. Place on a platter with potato salad and collard greens, and serve immediately.

Collard Greens
Paired with Societe Brewing The Apprentice IPA

¼ lb bacon
1 yellow onion, cut into 1-inch thick pieces
2 qts low-sodium beef broth
3 Tbsp red wine vinegar
2 Tbsp soy sauce
2 Tbsp brown sugar
1 Tbsp black pepper
4 bunches collard greens, stems removed and chopped
salt to taste

In a large pot over medium-high heat, sauté the bacon until it is crispy, about 8 minutes. Add the onions and cook for two minutes. Add the broth, vinegar, soy sauce, sugar and pepper, and bring the mixture to a simmer. Add the collard greens, then simmer until they are tender, about 1 hour. Season with salt as needed. Serve immediately.

—Recipes courtesy Tim Eylens, Executive Chef, Coaster Saloon
SPORTS & SUDS

As the first full month of spring, April sees some sports teams wind down seasons, while others are just getting started. Below are the home games for a variety of local teams: please note that dates are subject to change.

SOCKERS: Major Arena Soccer League @ Pechanga Arena
• SUNDAY, APRIL 7 VS. RIO GRANDE VALLEY BARRACUDAS
• SATURDAY, APRIL 13 VS. MONTERREY FLASH

STRIKE FORCE: Indoor Football League @ Pechanga Arena
• SUNDAY, APRIL 14 VS. CEDAR RAPIDS RIVER KINGS
• MONDAY, APRIL 22 VS. ARIZONA RATTLERS
• THURSDAY, MAY 9 VS. TUCSON SUGAR SKULLS
• SUNDAY, MAY 19 VS. ARIZONA RATTLERS
• FRIDAY, JUNE 7 VS. NEBRASKA DANGER

GULLS: American Hockey League @ Pechanga Arena
• FRIDAY, APRIL 5 VS. SAN JOSE BARRACUDA
• WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10 VS. TUCSON ROADRUNNERS

SEALS: National Lacrosse League @ Pechanga Arena
• FRIDAY, APRIL 12 VS. SASKATCHEWAN RUSH
• FRIDAY, APRIL 19 VS. COLORADO MAMMOTH
• SATURDAY, APRIL 27 VS. BUFFALO BANDITS

Pechanga Arena — or as native San Diegans are used to hearing, the Sports Arena — is home to The Sockers, Strike Force, Gulls, and Seals. The closest breweries to these games are Bay City, which is just across the street from the north end of the parking lot, and Modern Times Beer, a few blocks to the east. Phil’s BBQ, which just underwent a renovation, is another popular pre-game hangout nearby.
If you have a bit more time, try out the new beer lineup at Gaglione Bros. Cheesesteaks, less than a mile west.

LEGION: Major League Rugby @ Torero Stadium
• SUNDAY, APRIL 7
• SATURDAY, APRIL 20
• SUNDAY, JUNE 2

Previously, Coronado Brewing was a featured beer vendor at Legion games. At time of print, no word on the local beer situation for these last three home contests.

FLEET: Alliance of American Football @ SDCCU Stadium
• SATURDAY, APRIL 6 VS. ORLANDO APOLLOS
  (AWAY GAME; WATCH PARTIES TO BE HELD AT SECOND CHANCE TASTING ROOMS)
• SUNDAY, APRIL 14 VS. ARIZONA HOTSHOTS

The Fleet’s season is coming to a close, with just one home game remaining, at which you can surely find plenty of Second Chance Beer, the Fleet’s official craft beer partner for this year.

PADRES: Major League Baseball @ Petco Park
VS. SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS:
• THURSDAY, MARCH 28
• FRIDAY, MARCH 29
• SATURDAY, MARCH 30
• SUNDAY, MARCH 31
VS. ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS:
• MONDAY, APRIL 1
• TUESDAY, APRIL 2
• WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3
VS. COLORADO ROCKIES:
• MONDAY, APRIL 15
• TUESDAY, APRIL 16
VS. CINCINNATI REDS:
• THURSDAY, APRIL 18
• FRIDAY, APRIL 19
• SATURDAY, APRIL 20
• SUNDAY, APRIL 21
VS. SEATTLE MARINERS:
• TUESDAY, APRIL 23
• WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24
VS. LOS ANGELES DODGERS:
• FRIDAY, MAY 3
• SATURDAY, MAY 4
• SUNDAY, MAY 5
VS. NEW YORK METS:

It used to be difficult to find locally made beer at the stadium, but not these days, with local beer carts stationed on the main concourse for starters. Remember to save the date for BeerFest on Friday, June 28 vs. St. Louis Cardinals.

OVERTIME: BrewBattles @ Common Theory
• WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3 & THURSDAY, APRIL 4
  BURNING BEARD VS. MIKKELLER
• WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10 & THURSDAY, APRIL 11
  CHAPMAN VS. TOPA TOPA
• WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17 & THURSDAY, APRIL 18

ABNORMAL VS. BURGEON
• ROUND 2 BEGINS WEDNESDAY, MAY 1
• LAST FOUR BEGINS WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12
• CHAMPIONSHIP RUNS WEDNESDAY, JULY 3 TO SUNDAY, JULY 7

Loosely coinciding with the NCAA’s yearly basketball tournament, the Kearny Mesa pub pits two breweries against each other in a flight of four [two tasters of the same style per brewery].

OTL BEERFEST @ Mariners Point
• SATURDAY, MAY 18

This 3rd annual event is the kickoff to the summer’s Over the Line tournament put on by OMBAC [Old Mission Beach Athletic Club]. Dozens of craft breweries will be in attendance.

GOLF SERIES @ Riverwalk
Play 9 holes and drink from the following: BNS [Wednesday, April 17]; Bay City [Wednesday, May 15]; Ballast Point [Wednesday, June 19]; Karl Strauss [Wednesday, July 17]; Stone [Wednesday, August 21]; Deschutes [Wednesday, September 18]; and Mike Hess Brewing [Wednesday, October 16].
**APRIL**

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<tr>
<td>☑ Industry Nights with $5 Pints &amp; Keller Fest at Eppig North Park</td>
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<td>☑ Mix &amp; Mingle Monday with Bagby Beer Co. at Societe Brewing</td>
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<td><strong>3-4</strong> — Wed.-Thurs.</td>
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<td>☑ Brew Battles: Burning Beard vs. Mikkeller at Common Theory Public House</td>
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<td><strong>4</strong> — Thursday</td>
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<td>☑ Second Chance Dog Rescue Fundraiser at Bay City Brewing Co.</td>
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<td>☑ Art Gallery Opening Night: Roman Gomez at Culture Brewing Solana Beach</td>
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<td>☑ Art Gallery Opening Night: CJ Troxell at Culture Brewing Ocean Beach</td>
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<td>☑ Art Gallery Opening Night: Amanda Saint Claire at Culture Brewing Encinitas</td>
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<td>☑ Enchilada Flight with Good Seed Fo Co at Savagewood Brewery</td>
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<td>☑ Mix Tape Hazy Pale Ale Collab Release with Chris Barton at Fall Brewing</td>
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<td>☑ The Brewster Pink Boots Society IPA Release at Societe Brewing Company</td>
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<td>☑ 5th Anniversary Meading at the Garden at Alta Vista Botanical Gardens</td>
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<td>☑ Bluegrass Yoga at Societe Brewing</td>
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<td>☑ Yoga + Beer at Eppig North Park</td>
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<td><strong>7</strong> — Sunday</td>
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<td>☑ New Beer Lineup Launch Party at Pacific Beach AleHouse</td>
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<td>☑ Women Everyday Rose Can Release at Second Chance (Both Locations)</td>
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<td>☑ Happy Yoga at Culture Brewing Ocean Beach</td>
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<tr>
<td>☑ Mix &amp; Mingle Monday with Stone Brewing at Societe Brewing</td>
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<td>☑ Suds &amp; Science: The Internet of Biology with RH Fleet at Wavelength Brewing</td>
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<td>☑ Brew Battles: Chapman vs. Topa Topa at Common Theory Public House</td>
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<td>☑ Hops on the Harbor Beer Pairing Dinner Cruise with Booze Brothers</td>
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<td><strong>13</strong> — Saturday</td>
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<td>☑ Beer Fest at Dive: Harrah’s Resort Southern California</td>
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<td>☑ Second Saturday with Pizza Port at Hamltons Tavern</td>
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<td>☑ Third Anniversary Celebration at Burning Beard Brewing</td>
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<td>☑ The Barrel Experience Journey #3: Doppio Espresso at Second Chance (Both Locations)</td>
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<td>☑ Feeding San Diego: Pairings with a Purpose at Bobby Riggs Tennis Club &amp; Museum</td>
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<td>☑ Frühlingsfest &amp; 1st Anniv Party at Eppig Waterfront Biergarden</td>
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<td><strong>14</strong> — Sunday</td>
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<td>☑ Happy Yoga at Culture Brewing Ocean Beach</td>
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<td>☑ Day at the DOcks SS Beers All Day at Eppig Waterfront Biergarten</td>
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<td><strong>17-18</strong> — Wed.-Thurs.</td>
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<td><strong>17</strong> — Wednesday</td>
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<td>☑ Golf Club Beer Series with BNS Brewing &amp; Distilling at Riverwalk</td>
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<td><strong>19</strong> — Friday</td>
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<td>☑ Hops on the Harbor Beer Pairing Dinner Cruise with Booze Brothers</td>
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<td>☑ Yoga + Beer at Eppig North Park</td>
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<td><strong>26</strong> — Friday</td>
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<td>☑ ReGreen Brut IPA Release Party with Taylor Guitars at Karl Strauss</td>
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<td>☑ 6 Year Anniversary Party with Live Music at Tap That Oceanside</td>
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<td>☑ Walkabout featuring Pecan at Miralani Makers District</td>
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<tr>
<td>☑ La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club 6th Annual Quintessential Festival at Nobel Athletic Fields and Recreation Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>☑ 9th Annual Mission Valley Craft Beer and Food Festival</td>
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<td>☑ Happy Yoga at Culture Brewing Ocean Beach</td>
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| **MAY**

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<td>☑ Brew Battles: Round 2 at Common Theory Public House</td>
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<tr>
<td>☑ Enchilada Flight with Good Seed Food Co at Savagewood Brewery</td>
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<td>☑ Art Gallery Opening Night: Wade Konikowsky at Culture Brewing Solana Beach</td>
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<td>☑ Hops on the Harbor Beer Pairing Dinner Cruise with Mother Earth Brew Co.</td>
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<td>JUNE 7</td>
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INCLUDE YOUR EVENTS IN NEXT MONTH’S CALENDAR FOR FREE! EMAIL: info@westcoastersd.com
CALLING ALL LOVERS OF
SAN DIEGO CRAFT BEER
AND GOURMET BURGERS

Located in downtown, Brew30 California Taps features 30 rotating taps dedicated to local breweries and distilleries. Enjoy a gourmet burger, watch a game and experience San Diego’s award-winning craft beer all under one roof.

brew30.com  1 Market Place, San Diego CA 92101  (619) 232-1234
Self-park at Grand Hyatt San Diego for 3 free hours with validation when you visit Brew30 California Taps
Kombucha Craze
Pure Water Project
Coffee News
Kombucha (Alcoholic)

Chula Vista-based **Boochcraft** celebrates three years in business this month with a new brewery and 12-ounce cans rolling out for the first time. Besides retail outlets, catch their 7% ABV kombucha at events like the fifth annual Toast to the Coast, presented by Hearts for San Diego on Saturday, June 1.

Kombucha (Non-alcoholic)

**Babe Kombucha**, a nearly three-year-old company, has canned one of the first non-alcoholic kombuchas in San Diego. Their sixteen-ounce cans of Moroccan Mint (with fresh mint and citrus) and Maui Wowie (with strawberry, coconut, and banana) are now making appearances around San Diego County at spots such as Stehly Farms Market (Kensington), Eve Vegan Eats (Encinitas), 2Good2B Bakery & Cafe (Encinitas), Healthy Creations Cafe (Encinitas), Sabor de Vida Brazilian Grill (Encinitas), Northside Shack (Point Loma), Acai House (Westfield UTC), and Jensen’s (Point Loma). Of course, you can also grab some at the twelve-tap tasting room in Linda Vista.

Cascara

Local coffee-adjacent company **Bevea** recently won $5,000 and was named best product at the Ignite UC San Diego (UCSD) startup pitch battle. Under the Bevea umbrella, CEO Kabir Gambhir, a UCSD MBA alum, created a line of drinks called Cascaraa. That name closely references what makes the product special: cascara, which is the fruit and peel that surround the coffee bean itself. That peel, or husk, is generally discarded during coffee processing. Gambhir and his team cold brew that dried husk as part of crafting “sparkling superfruit tea” that’s bottled with these flavor combinations: elderflower, cardamom, and ginger; hibiscus and ginger; rose, chili, and ginger; lavender and ginger; and mint, basil, and ginger. Gambhir says each twelve-ounce bottle contains 30 mg of caffeine, or roughly one-third of a cup of coffee. At time of print, here’s where Cascaraa by Bevea was for sale: James Coffee, FIT Athletic (Carmel Mountain and downtown), Kettle & Stone Cafe, Ultreya Coffee, Mission Square Market, Sunshine Market at UCSD Price Center, Influx Cafe in North Park, Hillcrest Farmers Market, Little Italy Mercato, Paleo Treats, and Evolution Fast Food.
Coffee

Seven Seas Roasting Co. joined the South Park business community with a grand opening in mid-March. The company is one of several sponsors for the Xanadu Catalina Island 5K adventure on Saturday, May 11, and proceeds from their Spike’s Roast go to ballistics vests for active-duty K9s.

Mead

At the International Mazer Cup in Denver, Miralani outfit Lost Cause Meadery won five medals, tied for most by any mead maker. At time of press, two were still available at the tasting room: Blåsväder, a collaboration with Swedish beverage maker Sahtipaja (silver in the open/specialty [semi-sweet] category) — made with caramelized honey, blueberries, cinnamon and vanilla; and Wine Barrel Aged Easy Bender (bronze in the fruit mead [dry] category) — made with strawberries and black currants, and aged nine months in red wine barrels. Lost Cause also took gold and silver in the spiced mead (semi-sweet) category for the Harmonic Sequence, a collab with fermentation enthusiast Brian Trout — made with Brazilian pink pepper blossom honey, satsuma mandarin zest, cinnamon, vanilla, and pink peppercorns; and Mounds Rushmore (with cacao nibs, toasted coconut and vanilla). The fifth medal was a silver in the open/specialty (dry) category for Condor Attack, made with orange blossom honey, grapefruit, and hibiscus.

Wine

The San Diego County Vintners Association will host their annual wine festival on Saturday, May 18 at the Sikes Adobe Historic Farmstead in Escondido. This event is a fundraiser for the association, which aims to promote California’s oldest wine growing region.

Juice

Miramar’s Sol-ti now offers a line of teas with hemp CBD (18 mg per 12.5 oz glass bottle of peach and lemon; ginger and lemon; or hibiscus and lime) as well as two-ounce wellness shots (turmeric or ginger flavors) that each contain 30 mg of CBD. Stop by their tasting room to try other offerings.
Spirits

Miramar’s Cutwater Spirits, which opened in May of 2017, was acquired by Anheuser-Busch InBev. Financial terms were not disclosed. The brand began incubating at Ballast Point Brewing in Scripps Ranch in 2008, when head brewer Yuseff Cherney began working on a (relatively) small still inside the company’s Scripps Ranch facility, crafting gin, rum, whiskey, and vodka. In both 2013 and 2014, Ballast Point Spirits was named California Distillery of the Year at the New York International Spirits Competition, among many other accolades, especially for the company’s Devil’s Share Whiskey.

When Constellation Brands acquired Ballast Point Brewing & Spirits for $1 billion in late 2015, Cherney & co. were able to retain control of certain labels such as Old Grove Gin and Fugu Vodka. By August of 2016, Ballast Point founder Jack White, president & CEO Jim Buechler, chief commercial office Earl Kight III, and Cherney had all departed Ballast Point with their eyes set on opening Cutwater Spirits’ 50,000 square foot distillery and restaurant just blocks from Ballast Point’s Miramar flagship.

Cherney will stay on as founder/head of distilling, while Kight III will be founder/head of sales. Currently, Cutwater’s products are available in more than 30 states, fueled in great part by their 12 oz. canned “RTE — ready to enjoy” cocktails: Fugu Vodka Soda line (lime, grapefruit, or cucumber), Fugu Horchata Cold Brew, Tequila Paloma, Tequila Margarita, Black Skimmer Bourbon Whiskey Highball, Black Skimmer Bourbon Whiskey Lemon Tea, Fugu Vodka Mule, Old Grove Gin & Tonic, Fugu Vodka Bloody Mary (mild or spicy), Three Sheets Rum & Ginger, and Three Sheets Rum & Cola.

Seltzer

San Diego Brewing in Grantville, now in their twenty-sixth year of operation, continues innovating with their brew system. Recently, they’ve tapped nearly-non-alcoholic kombucha (under 1% ABV), “straight up hard kombucha” (5.5%), and a hard seltzer with lime (5%, pictured here).

![SD Brewing's hard seltzer. SDBT staff photo.](image-url)
Clean water is something we often take for granted, but the reality is that this is one of our most precious resources. Cape Town South Africa is in the midst of a water crisis, and faces the possibility of running out of clean water in 2019. Here in San Diego, California we import 85% of our water supply from the Colorado River and Northern California Bay Delta. The cost of this imported water has tripled in the last 15 years, and our city is under pressure to consider other options. That's where Pure Water San Diego comes in. Pure Water San Diego is a multi-phase project that aims to provide one third of San Diego's water supply locally by 2035.

How it Works

If San Diego is importing 85% of its water, how could over 30% be provided locally? Where is that water coming from? Well, as it turns out, only 8% of the city’s wastewater is recycled. The rest is treated and discharged into the ocean. Pure Water San Diego aims to close the loop, and make the city's water system more efficient and less wasteful. Using innovative new filtration technology, wastewater can be returned into the system at a quality that meets all federal and state drinking water standards. If you’re curious to learn more about how it all works, you’re in luck – Pure Water San Diego offers tours of their demonstration facility once a month. Keep reading to see some highlights from the tour, and learn about the 5-step filtration process that transforms wastewater into crystal clear H20!

Step 1: Ozonation

Ozone gas is injected into the water, which destroys microorganisms and breaks down organic substances. That's what's going on in the big blue pipes pictured to the right.

Step 2: Biologically Activated Carbon

Next, the water is passed through filters that contain carbon granules covered with helpful bacteria. These “good bacteria” eat 30-50% of organic matter—anything that is or was living at one time.
Step 3: Membrane Filtration

Now the water flows through all those giant beige tubes pictured below. Inside each of those tubes is a giant bundle of teeny tiny straw-shaped hollow fibers. These filter out over 99.99% of all the microscopic particles including bacteria and protozoa.

Step 4: Reverse Osmosis

According to the engineer on the tour with us, reverse osmosis is the real power horse of the whole process. Basically, osmosis is a process that occurs when fluids of two different concentrations are separated by a semi-permeable membrane. Larger molecules can’t move through the membrane, but water can. Reverse osmosis uses pressure to force water through super fine membranes, filtering out salts, minerals, personal care products and pharmaceuticals in the process.

Here’s a look into a cut cross section of one of the reverse osmosis pipes. The spirally wound membranes have very fine pores that capture the tiniest particles, including pharmaceuticals that end up in the water.
Reverse osmosis system.
At the end of the tour we got to sample some of the filtered water. I just had a little cup, but it tasted good to me. To be honest, I was a little nervous to try it. The idea of drinking wastewater is a little icky to me. But the reality is, here in San Diego we are at the end of the line when it comes to water. Even the water we import from Colorado and Northern California has been used by all the people upriver. Anyways, this filtered water passed all federal and state drinking water standards. It’s time to stop taking our water systems for granted. When you get to know the complexities that bring miraculous, life-giving water to your home every day, you start to value this precious resource more than ever. That’s why it’s important to use water wisely, and develop new technologies that help protect our most precious natural resource.

This article originally appeared on Live To Sustain (www.LiveToSustain.com)

Step 5: UV/Advanced Oxidation

This is the final step that destroys trace contaminants and break down the DNA of viruses and microbes. Here ultraviolet (UV) light reacts with sodium hypochlorite (the main ingredient in laundry bleach) to kill any remaining organisms.

Finally, the filtered water will be returned into the drinking water system, flowing out of taps and faucets throughout San Diego. The whole process will take nearly 20 years to complete, and involves a number of major construction projects to connect the pipelines and get everything up and running.

UV/Advanced Oxidation.

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Pure Water Community Outreach Specialist Tiffany Ngo (left) with author Laura Weatherbee.
A KICK-OFF TO SUMMER OVER-THE-LINE TOURNAMENT WITH SAN DIEGO’S FINEST LOCAL CRAFT BEER AND SPIRITS

3RD ANNUAL
OMBAC OTL BEER FEST

Beerfest | May 18th | 12pm-4pm
OTL Tourney | May 18th–19th | 7am–6pm

Mariner’s Point on the sand
OMBAC.ORG/BEERFESTOTL

Food and beverages will be onsite for purchase. Tournament entry and general admission tickets include access to beer tasting event. No outside food or beverages allowed.

TEAM ENTRY FEE $120 AND GENERAL ADMISSION $35
TOURNAMENT LIMITED TO FIRST 115 TEAMS
BATTEN DOWN THE HATCHES!

Boat Shoes Hazy IPA has flavors of citrus and sweet fruit that linger through a juicy finish. This unfiltered brew is intensely hopped and pairs perfectly with your nautical lifestyle.*

*ACTUAL BOAT NOT REQUIRED.