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Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

San Diego Beer Week is almost upon us, so it’s time to start getting prepared.

Visit sdbw.org to buy tickets for the two-day Guild Festival (November 1 & 2) and view other events; at time of press, O’Brien’s Pub had already populated the list with their classy happenings.

Don’t be selfish, though. Invite your out-of-town friends to visit during Beer Week so we can bolster San Diego’s reputation as a true beer drinking destination.

Also, be sure to use the hashtags #GuildFest #BrewerTakeover and #SDBW on social media to help build awareness. Ex: “I want to see @AleSmithBrewing Kopi Luwak Speedway Stout at the #GuildFest #BrewerTakeover during #SDBW”

As always, remember to designate a driver.

Salud,

Ryan Lamb
Executive Editor
West Coaster

P.S. Want to see Stone’s Greg Koch shave his beard and sport a mustache? Support his Movember campaign at us.movember.com/mospace/6522541; if he raises $15,000 for men’s health issues, Quality Social will host a public shaving party on November 1. Shave the date.
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West Coaster is published monthly by West Coaster Publishing Co.,
and distributed free at key locations throughout Greater San Diego.
For complete distribution list - westcoastersd.com/distribution.
Email us if you wish to be a distribution location.

FEEDBACK: Send letters to the Editor to
           ryan@westcoastersd.com

Letters may be edited for space. Anonymous letters are
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Brandon Hernández is a native San Diegan proud to be contributing to a publication that serves a positive purpose for his hometown and its beer loving inhabitants. In addition to his on-staff work for West Coaster, he is responsible for communications for local craft beer producer Stone Brewing Company; an editor for Zagat; the San Diego correspondent for Celebrator Beer News; and contributes articles on beer, food, restaurants and other such killer topics to national publications including The Beer Connoisseur, Beer West, Beer Magazine, Imbibe and Wine Enthusiast as well as local outlets including San Diego Magazine, The San Diego Reader, Edible San Diego, Pacific San Diego, Ranch & Coast and U-T San Diego.

Gonzalo J. Quintero, Ed.D. is a San Diego native, three-time SDSU grad, career educator, and co-founder of the popular multimedia craft beer discussion craftbeertasters.com. An avid homebrewer, Cicerone Certified Beer Server, and seasoned traveler, Dr. Quintero takes great pride in educating people about craft beer and the craft beer culture. By approaching the subject from the perspective of a scholar and educator, Dr. Quintero has developed a passion for spreading the good word of local beer.

Ryan Reschan is a long time resident of North County San Diego, and he first got into craft beer during his time at UC San Diego while completing a degree in Electrical Engineering. Skipping the macro lagers, he enjoyed British and Irish style ales before discovering the burgeoning local beer scene in North County and the rest of the country. After his introduction to brewing beer by a family friend, he brewed sparingly with extract until deciding to further his knowledge and transition into all-grain brewing. Between batches of beer, he posts video beer reviews on YouTube (user: StumpyJoeJr) multiple times a week along with occasional homebrew videos and footage of beer events he attends.

Sam Tierney is a graduate of the Siebel Institute and Doemens World Beer Academy brewing technology diploma program. He currently works as a brewer at Firestone Walker Brewing Company and has most recently passed the Certified Cicerone® exam. He geeks out on all things related to brewing, beer styles, and beer history.

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Three breweries are set to release cans in the near future. Modern Times, pictured on our cover, started canning in late September; those beers will be available with Stone Distributing in October, as well as in the tasting room in 4-packs. Pizza Port Bressi Ranch is also working on getting their canning line up and running for Ponto Session IPA, Chronic Amber Ale and Swami’s IPA. In late September Mission Brewery also started canning, but in 32 oz. packaging for their Conquistador Extra Pale Ale.

Modern Times’ Alex Tweet gets to know some wet Mosaic hops that’ll go into a beer called Orderville alongside Simcoe and Chinook. That beer should be released early October. Photos: Ryan Lamb
MOVEMBEER’S COMING
Stone Brewing Co. Co-Founder & CEO Greg Koch is set to shave off that big beard in time for November, if he can raise enough money for men’s health at us.movember.com/mospace/6522541. His personal goal is $25,000, but he’ll have a public shaving party at Quality Social on November 1 if $15,000 is raised. “Twice in my life I’ve shaved a goatee leaving a mustache, and both times I removed it the same day because it freaked me out when I looked in the mirror. I can’t imagine having one for a month,” said Koch. “My current beard is stately and reminiscent of our founding fathers. Yet if I raise enough money, I’m trading that stately look for a mustache that’ll probably be reminiscent of a bad 70’s album cover. Sometimes I amaze even myself at the lengths I’ll go, or cut, for charitable causes. Now that’s self-sacrifice on behalf of others! So, I’m calling for your support. Donate not for me, but for the causes. I’m just your humble servant.”

BREWHERIES OPENED IN SEPTEMBER
Six breweries opened in San Diego county during the month of September. In Vista, Barrel Harbor; in Escondido, Plan 9 Ale House; in Middletown, Acoustic Ale Works; in Loma Portal, Modern Times; in Fallbrook, Fallbrook Brewing Company; and in Mira Mesa, Two Kids Brewing Co. Presently there are 76 breweries throughout the county and 38 in various planning stages. To keep tabs on the latest, check out westcoastersd.com/sd-brewing-industry-watch/.

FESTIVE FALL
Last month saw tons of great charity beer events. The annual breast cancer awareness fundraiser / beer release at Green Flash: Treasure Chest Fest, happened on September 7th. Churchill’s in San Marcos hosted the 4th annual Sourfest on September 14th, with proceeds donated to cancer research.

ANNIVERSARIES
Lots of local beer businesses celebrated anniversaries in September. Downtown Johnny Brown’s celebrated its 26th year on 9/13, and the longest running beer festival in town, the San Diego Festival of Beers, had its 19th year on 9/20. Del Cerro’s bottleshop/brewpub KnB Wine Cellars turned five years old late August, while Aztec Brewing Company and Tiger! Tiger! celebrated their 2nd Anniversary both on 9/7. Indian Joe Brewing also celebrated one year in business on 9/21.

BREWING IN VALLEY CENTER
Valley Center Brewing recently received their ABC approval in August, and brewed up the first test batch, Cool Valley Lager (4% ABV) on 9/7. Their second test batch was brewed on 9/13: Cumbres Pail Ale, at 5% ABV. Currently they don’t have a tasting room, but they’re hoping to have kegs and bottles available in early October if the test batches turn out.

Got tips on news stories we should be covering in the magazine and online? E-mail us at info@westcoastersd.com!

Stephan, Jenn, Jaime and Chuck McLaughlin at a ribbon cutting ceremony for Fallbrook Brewing Co. alongside ambassadors from the Chamber of Commerce on September 24.
WE TRACKED

A KIWI

ACROSS THE PACIFIC TO BRING HOME THIS TRIPLE IPA

With the aim of finding unique ingredients, we honed in on New Zealand grown Green Bullet and Pacific Gem hops to create our Triple IPA. This high caliber addition to our arsenal will stun the senses of the most skilled hop hunters. Give Green Bullet a shot today, and stuck up for the season!
Ask a non-San Diegan what they think of when they hear the words San Diego. Most people will say “the beach.” Outside of that, you’re likely to hear about Mexican food, bad sports teams, or cetacean reproductive organs, thanks to Will Ferrell. If Stone CEO Greg Koch and former Mayor Jerry Sanders get their way, craft beer is about to get a major bump.

On September 19, scores of local policy-makers gathered for a hospitality and tourism economic summit focused on craft beer at Stone Brewing World Bistro & Gardens - Liberty Station. Councilmen, congressional candidates, hoteliers, sports executives and theme park operators took in presentations with one goal in mind: make San Diego synonymous with craft beer. While it may seem like San Diego has long-since attained this goal, Koch thinks we can do better.

Koch began by looking at how integrated beer and wine are into the cultures of Munich and Napa Valley, respectively. Looking at those cities, he lamented that someone can “live in or visit San Diego and leave not understanding the significant presence that San Diego craft beer has grown to, and the international recognition that we’ve earned.” Koch drove his point home by pointing out that San Diego netted fewer than 300 votes in Charlie Papazian’s most recent “BeerCity USA” poll. To put that in perspective, Grand Rapids won the poll with more than 27,000 votes.

Sanders, now the head of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, offered some suggestions on raising the profile of San Diego craft beer. “We need to make sure that we’re boasting about San Diego as a craft beer destination,” said Sanders. “We should make a pledge that when people come from all over the country to run in the Rock & Roll Marathon, they’re not getting Bud Light or Miller Lite, they’re getting San Diego craft beer that really brands our region.”

It’s evident from the summit that the San Diego beer industry can tap into unrealized potential with a proactive strategy. Instead of thinking of the beer as a cherry on top of the beautiful weather, Koch and Sanders want San Diegans to think of beer as the main course. Only time will tell if San Diego will be able to market itself as more than just the sun.

Jerry Sanders’ San Diego Craft Beer Pledge, as recited at the summit:
I know San Diego’s reputation in the world of beer is second to none and I pledge to create a city that celebrates our craft beer. As a part of America’s Finest City, I pledge to build a region in which citizens and visitors alike know the relevance, importance and diversity of San Diego craft beer.

I pledge to put San Diego craft beer in the center of every relevant communication. And I will faithfully promote San Diego craft beer, fostering direct economic benefit to San Diego’s Tourism and Hospitality industries.

Ed. note: One concrete way that you can help spread the word of San Diego craft beer is to invite your friends to visit during San Diego Beer Week, especially for the Guild Fest (Nov. 1 & 2) that supports the San Diego Brewers Guild. Also, use the hashtags #GuildFest #BrewerTakeover & #SDBW
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n the beginning, there were no beer styles, there was only beer. Traveling here or there about the ancient world, you would have encountered unique beverages based on local ingredients and techniques. Communication was poor and brewing knowledge was fragmented and slow to spread. Over the centuries, regions and even individual towns and cities developed distinct brewing styles that set their beers apart from others. When new technologies or ingredients were introduced, there were sometimes splits in the local brewing community and new styles were formed. The introduction of hops to the British Isles led to the fragmentation of the brewing industry into beer breweries that adopted the new spice, and ale breweries that stuck with the old gruit spices they had been using for centuries. On the continent, there were guilds of white beer breweries that used wind-dried wheat malt, while neighboring brown and red beer brewers made dark, smokey beers from wood fire-kilned malts.

We’ll never know how many times a brewer came back from a trip somewhere and said, “I really want to brew a beer like they brew in that super rad town I just came back from. Why don’t we make beer like that here?” There are a few examples we can point to though; some of the most storied stylistic milestones have come attached to tales of traveling brewers. Pilsner was invented after Czech brewers learned from the English how to make pale malt, and a Bavarian brewmaster then brought his local lager yeast into the equation. At Rodenbach in West Flanders, they credit their founding brewmaster’s time studying porter brewing in England for the original invention of their sour, wood-aged red ale. Population migrations have also spread brewing styles and techniques around the world. Lager brewing took hold in North and South America due principally to the mass immigration of central Europeans in the 19th century.

Thus, we have the modern spectrum of beer styles. As com-
munication between brewers proliferated, it became common to brew several styles of beer using varied ingredients and techniques. Even in the oldest brewing centers, styles of other regions had been adopted and tweaked into local variations. Munich was once steadfastly a dark lager town until the popularity of golden Bohemian lagers finally won out; the pale-but-malty helles lager is currently the dominant style in town. Nearly everywhere else in the world, the dry, low-hopped, often adjunct-lightened style of international pale lager is now the most popular and dominantly brewed style of beer. In the US, small brewers now brew pretty much every style ever heard of, with more unique beers continuously coming out.

Our modern understanding of beer styles can be traced back to the work of the late, great beer writer Michael Jackson and specifically his 1977 book, The World Guide To Beer. Jackson traveled extensively in the traditional beer countries, observing the styles unique to each location and recording what he found. Brewing texts had previously described various types of beer from around the world, but Jackson’s extensive organizing of styles formed the base for most of what we understand about style today. His classifications were based heavily on place of origin and describe mostly styles that are traditional to European countries, though he did describe American styles of the time like cream ale, steam beer, and malt liquor.

Style guidelines like the Beer Judge Certification Program guidelines and the Brewers Association guidelines built on this initial framework and created extensive descriptions of many styles for the purpose of judging amateur and commercial beers, respectively. The guidelines are tailored so that beers entered into competition can be judged against a stylistic standard that allows the personal preferences of judges to be mitigated. Without style guidelines, judging would be an essentially hedonistic exercise, with judges selecting their favorite beers as the winners.

Beer rating website Ratebeer.com conversely encourages such a hedonistic approach to rating beers, as opposed to the stylistic approach of beer competitions. A quick look over the top-rated beers clearly illustrates the result of generally disregarding guidelines in competition, as the top beers are overwhelmingly imperial stouts, which is apparently the most favored style of Ratebeer users. This upsets some people, but it must be noted that the aim of the overall Ratebeer rankings is to identify the commercial beers that consumers find the most excellent according to their personal preferences. Ratebeer also includes best-of-lists broken down by style category, which are more similar to the results you would see in style-based competitions. Style categories on rating sites are a bit different from competition guidelines and, especially with Ratebeer, they tend to be broader and less defined. They are an attempt to cleanly separate every known beer in the world into an accurate grouping, so there will necessarily be some vague styles that cover a lot of unique beers. Beer Advocate takes a slightly more specific approach and tends to break beers down into more specific styles.

Style guidelines are a human attempt to categorize a human endeavor, often crossing culture and time in the process. Naturally, there will be opinion and compromise in their creation. Jackson had the benefit of a much less dynamic and varied brewing industry back in the 70s when he formed his taxonomy. American beer was essentially a handful of styles at the time, with only several truly unique styles to worry about. In Europe, there were some very established and clearly defined styles in existence that in many cases simply needed to be properly named and described. Beers like bock and hefeweizen were already clearly defined, even legally in Germany, which has always been the most rigid culture in regards to beer style, owing in large part to their Reinheitsgebot beer purity law. In the absence of previously recognized styles, Jackson did his best to describe what he found at the time, sometimes creating style groupings that brewers and drinkers at the time had not themselves adopted, such as the Flemish red style, which was a disparate combination of mixed-fermentation beers from Flanders. Belgian beers on the whole were mostly a blend of many somewhat-related beers that sometimes shared names. Belgian styles remain somewhat enigmatic, and many Belgian brewers still brew in their own unique style.

Those challenges look like child’s play compared to what we face today in attempting to keep up on stylistic categorization. As the “New World” style of brewing has spread like wildfire across the world, beer styles are spawning and evolving at breakneck speed. What we have previously taken as gospel is no longer safe; however, a careful reading of history shows us that this is really nothing new. For example, mild ale is today understood as a low gravity, lightly-hopped ale that is usually dark in color, and has been since about World War Two. In the mid-19th century though, mild ales were often the same strength and color as modern American IPA, and hopped almost as highly. At the time, “mild” simply referred to the fact that the beer was not aged before consumption, as beers like IPA and Porter were at the time. Porter and stock pale ale, spending months aging in oak, would have had much of the character that we associate with sour and wild ale today.

Styles are simply in a constant state of flux; shifting economic pressures, brewing technology, and consumer tastes have pulled all of them in various directions over the decades. Any codification is really just a snapshot of their state at a particular point in time. We can argue for days over which version of a style is the most “authentic,” but in the end, they are all equally valid.
ers can never disconnect the “how” from the “what” with regards to the role of the brewing process and ingredients in the end product. Most drinkers are perfectly happy to think of a stout as a black beer with strong roasted malt flavors reminiscent of coffee or chocolate. Most brewers think of a stout as an ale with a significant portion of roasted barley or malt, possible dark caramel malt additions, and a base of pale or pale ale malt. They will then consider how varying the amount of hop bitterness and aroma, overall strength, yeast strain, or specific roasted malt composition can pull a stout across the various sub-styles like foreign, sweet, oatmeal, American, Irish, Baltic, Russian imperial, or porter for that matter, as most brewers recognize that that porter and stout are essentially the same thing.

What a brewer ends up calling a beer depends heavily on what term they think will lead to the best sales. This is illustrated quite well right now with the proliferation of the IPA style as a catch-all for any hoppy beer. Many hoppy beers that were previously grouped in other styles like American wheat, red ale, or pale ale are now being called wheat IPA, red IPA, and session IPA because IPA has gained mass recognition among most beer drinkers, instantly catching their attention in the beer aisle or at the bar. It’s simply easier to sell someone a red IPA than a red ale with a description clarifying that the beer is hopped at levels similar to an American IPA. I’m not the biggest fan of this evolution, but it is clearly the way the market is shifting right now.

Styles are an easy shorthand method for brewers to communicate the basic characteristics of a beer to their drinkers. Even as styles drift away from their original cultural history and character, they remain relevant because we generally still agree on what their basic character should be. Imagine if you walked into a brewpub or bar and there were no styles posted for any of the beers, just a list of ingredients, technical specifications, and flavor descriptors. Those with enough knowledge could use this information to find the kind of beer they were looking for, but even so, this kind of system is simply too long-winded and lacks the directness that recognized styles have. When considering bottled beer at the store, brewers often only have room for a few words on the label to catch your eye as you peruse a myriad of options. A simple “IPA” on the front of the label is a much more effective means of communicating what your beer is like than a wall of text explaining that it is a medium-to-high-strength, light-colored ale with generous hop aroma and bitterness. Obviously, this kind of description can be useful as a counterpart to the main style name, but does not possess the same clarity and directness.

A brewer recently told me that styles are a great starting point when coming up with new beers, but, on the other hand, they can become straightjackets of expectation. When you see IPA or pilsner on a label, you have expectations for the beer based on your past experiences. If that beer doesn’t deliver on those expectations, you are likely to look upon it less favorably, despite how good of a beer it might be on its own terms. Further complicating this, many people have received dubious information about many beer styles and subsequently have misconceptions about them. Putting a name like pilsner on your label can hurt you from both sides, with many drinkers associating the style with macro lagers, while typical light beer drinkers looking to branch out may find the beer undrinkably hoppy. The bottom line is that everyone has their own unique prejudices with different beer styles and you just can’t account for all of them.

The ebb and flow of styles can be a confusing yet exciting ride, so set out there and explore new styles, read up on the classics, and try to build a solid understanding of the spectrum of beer styles. Studies show that knowledge about a subject increases chances of enjoyment, and there are worse things out there to spend time learning about than beer.
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What do you feel were some key take-away points from the San Diego Craft Beer Tourism & Hospitality Economic Summit held at Stone Brewing World Bistro & Gardens - Liberty Station on September 19?

Everyone made important points about making San Diego beer an inextricable part of the city’s identity. Imploring event planners behind things like the Rock and Roll Marathon or a small community festival that it’s to their benefit to turn down a potentially more lucrative sponsorship from Anheuser Busch, because people will have a more memorable time and would be likely to return if they’re drinking good beer and having a good time. That’s important, and true, but it’s also something that I think most brewery owners and craft beer fans have also heard and thought many times over.

The more relevant takeaway, in my opinion, was who was hearing the pitch this time. The summit attendees were really the people who, like it or hate it, make all the decisions in this town. Former mayor and now CEO of the regional Chamber of Commerce, Congressional candidate Carl DeMaio, Councilman Mark Kersey, tourism authority CEO Joe Terzi, councilmembers from Escondido and National City, folks from the regional Economic Development Council. So I think the fact that the conversation is now happening in front of the people who actually have the power to make the big change happen was probably the most important thing I saw. The summit still dealt with a lot of broad ideas and goals, and just making a basic sale of the concept, rather than saying “here is a piece of policy that we could implement and help the industry, you powerful people should all go support it.” But, getting the big idea in front of people outside the beer world is a big change (even if Sanders was somewhat involved with beer as mayor, and Mayor Bob Filner had put together a beer task force).

What current land use issues are breweries facing?

It seems to me the land use issues facing breweries are the same ones facing the city as a whole. One big one, and Jacob McKean at Modern Times has really been beating this drum, is that there just aren’t many acceptable industrial properties within the central core area of the city of San Diego. That’s the type of thing that isn’t solved simply, but changes to zoning could play a role, as could just making the city’s development services department more efficient. Builders constantly complain about how time consuming and expensive it is to get approval to build anything. Assuming you believe all the anecdotes out there are true—and I’ve tried to establish it with data, which is a whole other nightmare—that’s one thing the city could fix and see improved conditions for all sorts of things, including the brewing industry.

Similarly, the conditional use permit process is a nightmare by all accounts. That type of permit basically lets business open in an area where they otherwise wouldn’t be able to, but there’s a public process that lets the community impose some conditions on the operation. It makes sense to let the community have a say in what’s going on in their neighborhood, but businesses avoid the prospect at all costs because it’s so uncertain and can really delay their plans. Ballast Point ended up opening a restaurant in Little Italy rather than just a tasting room because it allowed them to avoid the process. Improving that process to bring a bit more certainty to the equation, while still letting the community play a role, would really help. This one is especially important now, as interest in the beer world grows and new converts might be more interested in a brewery near where they work and live, rather than out in the industrial parks of Mira Mesa where many breweries I’ve always gone to have always been. But, again, improving this wouldn’t just help breweries. It’s really a broad land use issue that would help breweries, and all kinds of other things also.
Where does San Diego rank in terms of capita per brewery?
So the Brewers Association releases a yearly list ranking all the states in how many people there are for every brewery. It’s sort of useful, but it also skews things in favor of places like Montana and Alaska and Wyoming, that just have very small populations. I took the list and just did a really simple calculation of San Diego’s breweries—using West Coaster’s ongoing count, obviously—and divided it by the 2010 census count for San Diego County. San Diego County comes in ninth if you just plug it into the state list, with one brewery for every 42,933 people. In fairness, if I’m pointing out that the list skews in favor of places with a low population, I should also add that it’s not really a fair comparison to put San Diego County, which is a predominantly developed area with a huge city in it, and compare it to entire states that have massive, unpopulated areas. Obviously if I added Imperial County to San Diego and redid the ranking, we’d come out looking worse. But I really just wanted to put in context how many breweries are here, and get a rough sense of what’s going on elsewhere, and I think it basically confirmed what I imagine most of your readers already knew: there are a lot of breweries in San Diego, but there’s also some cool stuff happening in Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Vermont, et cetera.

Why did Voice of San Diego start writing about beer?
I write about land use, development, politics, all the things that work together to make the city the way it is for the people who live here. One of my pitches when I wanted to start writing about beer was that all the breweries and bars and bottle shops and festivals and different things that have made craft beer into a community, basically, are part of that basic definition of my beat. I’m supposed to write about why our city is the way it is, and craft beer is part of that conversation now. It just is.

The other thing is, people really like and react to craft beer right now. It’s on people’s radar. Part of my challenge is to make some relatively staid concepts interesting and accessible, so people want to read about it and so they walk away feeling like they got something out of the 5 or 10 minutes they spend reading a story. Craft beer in some ways is just a way for me to frame things that are happening in the city in a way that makes those things interesting. It would otherwise be really tough to imagine anyone reading about conditional use permits. But if I can say, “Look, this vague part of city planning is having an effect on Ballast Point’s new location,” it’s a different story.

How did you get into beer?
When I was in college I worked at one of the long-standing brewpubs in Baltimore, called the Wharf Rat, which brewed its own line, Oliver Ales. That was basically the start of it, and it especially helped me see just how many different styles our brewer was turning out, and how much he was experimenting with different things. From there, it progressively grew from a mild interest into a basically an obsession. Maybe hobby is a healthier word.

Infograms via voiceofsandiego.org/2013/09/19/san-diegos-craft-beer-economy-in-three-charts/
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You may have heard brewers and wine makers talking about “Brett,” the nickname given to Brettanomyces (pronounced brett-TAN-oh-MY-seize), a genus of yeast in the family Saccharomycetaceae. Winemakers tend to be frightened by Brett but brewers have started to embrace the interesting flavors produced by the different strains. Often referred to as wild yeast, Brettanomyces will live on the skins of fruit, but these days it’s being collected by labs and cultured for brewers to use.

For winemakers, Brettanomyces is considered to be a spoilage agent because compounds it produces can be associated with the flavors of Band-aids, barnyard, sweaty socks, cheese, horse blanket, and other unappealing characteristics. However, in the world of beer, particularly in Belgium, Brettanomyces is important in the making of traditional lambic. Lambic is a style of Belgian wheat beer that is spontaneously fermented with whatever yeast and bacteria is floating about in the air and hiding in the brewery’s barrels. Brett can have a very positive effect on the flavor profile of lambics, saisons/farmhouse ales, and Oud Bruin and Flanders red ales.

The most common misconception of Brettanomyces is that it’s the main souring agent in wild ales. While some strains of Brett can produce some slight acidity, this tartness generally comes from bacteria such as Lactobacillus or Pediococcus. Brewers can therefore produce an array of non-sour Brett beers, which is something American craft breweries have been exploring recently.

Yet while there are hundreds of strains of Brettanomyces found in the wild, only a small number of strains have been studied and cultured. Flavors range from funky barnyard, horse blanket, stone fruits, tropical fruits (especially mango and pineapple), hay, spice (think saison-esque in character), cherry, strawberry, honey, citrus, and more. Using a combination of strains can create very complex, yeast-driven beers.

Brett can be used for primary or secondary fermentation (or both); it really just depends on your desired flavor profile. A general guide with the yeast is that the higher the pitching rate, the cleaner the beer will be. As usual, fermentation temperatures are also a factor; for a cleaner profile, use lager pitching rates and ferment the beer as if you are using an ale strain of yeast. Brett can attenuate a beer further than typical ale yeast strains so you’ll have to be careful with how you package your finished beer.

Typically a normal fermentation timeframe can be expected for most of the duration, but eventually the yeast activity will die down and slowly ferment out the beer further. With a drier beer, any kind of hop bitterness will be further accentuated. So for something like a Brett IPA, cut down on the bittering hop addition (this would be a great time to use the hop bursting technique), and add grains such as oats and wheat to help with the mouthfeel. You’ll likely want to exclude any crystal malts as they will get in the way of the hop and yeast characters.

A recent trend of 100% Brett fermented IPAs is starting to gain in popularity. Using a large pitch of a strain like Brettanomyces bruxellensis Trois will produce yeast character with a lot of mango and pineapple character that will work great with the more fruity hops available.

**COMMERCIAL EXAMPLES OF BEERS WITH BRETT AVAILABLE IN SAN DIEGO:**

- Goose Island Matilda
- Green Flash Rayon Vert
- Logsdon Seizoen Bretta
- Modern Times Neverwhere
- Orval
- The Lost Abbey/New Belgium Mo’ Betta Bretta

**MORE BRETT INFO:**

- brettanomycesproject.com
- embracesthefunk.com
- funkfactorygeuzeria.com/2013/06/brett-strain-guide.html
- themadfermentationist.com
GOURD VIBRATIONS

Pumpkin beer’s best use may be as an ingredient rather than a quaff

WORDS AND PHOTO BY BRANDON HERNÁNDEZ

There was a time when the pumpkin beers on the market were of such low quality, there was only one I’d have ever recommended cooking with (Buffalo Bill’s Pumpkin Ale, in case you’re curious). But nowadays, thanks mostly to craft brewers wanting to elevate a novelty style into something of quality in keeping with the burgeoning craft beer movement, there are a number of culinarily viable pumpkin beers on the market. Among them are Dogfish Head Punkin Ale, Avery Rumpkin, Uinta Oak Jacked Imperial Pumpkin Ale and Almanac’s Farm to Barrel Heirloom Pumpkin Barleywine.

Pumpkin ales aren’t terribly popular in San Diego, but some local breweries do produce them when fall rolls around. One of those operations is Manzanita Brewing Company, which uses a base recipe similar to an English-style bitter, a variety of autumn spices, and gobs of gourds to bring on a Thanksgiving dessert-esque flavor profile to its Witch’s Hair pumpkin ale.

In developing the recipe for the aforementioned pumpkin beer bread, I scored some Witch’s Hair off the brewery’s fermentation tanks. It wasn’t yet ready for bottling and had yet to fully carbonate, which made it no good for drinking, but perfect for baking. Instead of needing to boil the carbonation out of the beer, I was able to skip that step and merely get it to room temperature before incorporating it into the batter.

By the time this article shows up in print, the beer will be available in bottles and growlers from Manzanita’s brewery and tasting room in Santee. It will make for extra steps, but a much more satisfying cooking experience in that those making the recipe will be able to set aside the amount of beer they’ll need to cook with, then consume the cold beer they have left. (Ah, there’s definitely something to this whole cooking with beer thing, now isn’t there?)

If you are unable to procure Witch’s Hair and are looking to select another pumpkin beer ideally suited for this recipe, select varieties that are on the darker side. The roastiness of the malts used to give those beers their color will lend themselves to the overall flavor profile of the finished product. It’s also best, though not absolutely necessary, to go with ales over lagers as the sulfur-like notes sometimes given off by lager yeast don’t typically play very well with the taste of the recipe’s other ingredients.

The bread makes for a brilliant breakfast treat. If serving it in the morning, you can go with nothing more than a warm, thick slice and, perhaps, a smear of sweet cream butter. The bread can also serve as a nice mid-day snack or a season-appropriate dessert. If ending off a nice meal, feel free to garnish it, as outlined in the recipe, with some spiced crème fraîche (rich, naturally loved by the uninitiated and, generally, despised by craft beer aficionados, pumpkin beers remain a growing slice of the American craft beer pie. Yes, beer geek, we know. Many aren’t made with pumpkin and even the ones that are don’t taste like pumpkin, they taste like the pumpkin pie spices they are fortified with. But these autumnal oddities are here to stay. So rather than turn a nose up to them, why not use them in a new way and turn that olfactory protrusion in the direction of a freshly baked loaf of pumpkin beer bread?
Pour the beer into a saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer and let cook for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool to room temperature.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Cream the butter and the sugar together using an electric mixer. Add the eggs, one at a time, and mix until fully incorporated. Add the pumpkin, baking soda, salt, flour, nuts, cinnamon, nutmeg and beer and mix until fully incorporated. Use a spatula to transfer the mixture to a greased loaf pan. Place in the oven and bake until a long toothpick inserted into the center of the loaf comes out clean, about 1 hour and 10 minutes.

Maple Spice Crème Fraîche
Yield: 1 cup
1 cup crème fraîche
1 1/2 Tbsp pure maple syrup
1/2 tsp nutmeg, freshly grated
1/4 tsp clove, ground

Mix all of the ingredients together until they are completely incorporated. Chill or serve at room temperature.

Recipes courtesy of Brandon Hernández

LOCAAL BREWERIES PRODUCING PUMPKIN BEERS
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Butcher’s   Helm’s   Monkey Paw

If you go the ice cream route, consider once again incorporating beer. A brown ale, stout or barleywine ice cream with cinnamon and nutmeg added would be ideal. For a good beer ice cream recipe, visit the West Coaster website and check out the recipe for beer ice cream in the magazine’s March 2012 issue (page 6).

For fans of pumpkin beer, this recipe is bound to bring on as much elation as a Thanksgiving Day touchdown throw or a pillow case chock full of fun-size sweets. But even if you’re not a fan of pie-spiced ales and lagers, now you’ll have something to do with that bottle you were gifted by that houseguest of yours who thought they were introducing you to the autumn equivalent of Pliny the Younger.

—Recipes courtesy of Brandon Hernández
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The Most Expensive Real Estate in San Diego?

As number of breweries expands, distributors try to match pace

By Andy Killion

Prohibitively expensive San Diego real estate has not deterred emerging breweries from opening, and San Diego County is on pace to break the 90-brewery mark by the end of 2013, from just north of 30 breweries five years prior. Even affluent neighborhoods can find great beer within walking distance; from Thorn St. Brewery within reach of Golden Hill, or Culture Brewing Co. in tony Solana Beach. And while breweries quickly fill the surplus of “real property” in San Diego, tap space isn’t keeping up.

“It used to be tap space in search of beer,” said Craig Broderick, proprietor of Brody’s Burgers and Beer in Jamul. “Now, it’s beer in search of tap space.”

Though 18 miles from the heart of downtown, rural Jamul has a neighborhood brewery in Cold Bore Brewing Co., who self-distributes and is a regular feature on Brody’s 23 taps. According to Broderick, Brody’s came online at the right time.

“Had I started my biz earlier, I would have been in dire need of beer,” Broderick remarked in regard to his geographical disadvantage, “but from last year to this year, it’s night and day in terms of beer availability.”

Broderick continued, noting that smaller breweries had issues getting carried by a large distributor, such as Crest Beverage or Budweiser/Anheuser-Busch, but that changed when Stone Brewing opened the distribution side of the company and started carrying smaller-batch breweries who couldn’t meet larger distributors’ quotas.

While providing a much-needed relief valve to the mega-distributor bottleneck, Chad Heath, Southern California sales director for Stone Distributing, still feels pressure to keep up with the onslaught of new local breweries.

“This amazing explosion of selection has challenged distribution a bit in keeping up with the sheer amount of products we are now able to sell,” Heath said. “There will come a point when breweries aren’t able to find distributors to distribute their beer because they are ‘full’. To date we aren’t there yet, but I feel that is inevitable and, for some of the startup brands, it would become more and more difficult to secure distribution deals.”

But that doesn’t mean there isn’t any hope for emerging breweries, Heath continued. “Good beer will win out and there will always be room in a quality distributor’s portfolio for breweries producing exceptional product.”

The Give and Take

In a business that’s all about relationships — as distributors are prohibited from negotiating with vendors based on price — Heath maintains that the biggest challenge in those relationships is providing access to limited-release, rare beers.

“Almost all craft breweries these days are making small batch, exclusive beers,” said Heath. “They put a good demand on the wholesaler to make sure these beers get to the right accounts, on time and with the correct quantity… Stone has refined this process to a ‘T’."

Frank Green, brand ambassador and sales manager for Port Brewing Co./The Lost Abbey, said that there is great opportunity for breweries who have in-house representatives and also partner with a larger distributor, such as Stone.

“Having (Stone) working in concert with me allows for more visits and touches on my accounts,” Green said.

Grant Tondro, co-owner of Urge Gastropub, The Barrel Room, and Brothers Provisions in Rancho Bernardo, said that, like all good relationships, the vendor-distributor romance involves give and take.

“All our distributors know that our goals are to have specialty kegs for specialty events, which drive our sales and are a lot of fun to put on.” Tondro noted. “(Distributor) goals are to hit their depletion quotas. As a result, we often have conversations that revolve around ‘I’ll take a Fat Tire now if I can be guaranteed a La Folie later’ topics.

Urge Gastropub’s Grant Tondro, at a Stone tap takeover event.

Photo: Ryan Lamb
While Tondro uses New Belgium Brewing for an example, he said there are similar pushes being made by self-distributing breweries and their representatives.

“Of course, we wouldn’t take a keg of absolute crap just to secure a specialty keg, but we feel that it is reasonable to help them hit their depletions as long as they help us put on great events,” said Tondro.

One brewery that Tondro mentioned as being notably persistent and a regular feature on Urge’s tap list is Firestone Walker Brewing Co., a sentiment echoed by Broderick at Brody’s.

“Firestone is at a size where, although distributed by Crest Beverage, they’re actively pursuing full-time space,” said Broderick. “And they have reps out in Jamul who are willing to work on those relationships.”

Broderick added that, in addition to self-distributing breweries, the recent arrival of Craft Beer Guild Distributing of California gives even greater access to smaller breweries and their limited releases, which prompts the question: with distribution options increasing, who drives vendor-distributor negotiations?

“Nobody is indispensable,” said Darren Renna, general manager of the Coaster Saloon in Mission Beach. “For example, Ballast Point and Green Flash are distributed by Crest Beverage — by far the biggest player — but if you want first access to Palate Wrecker, Dorado or a new specialty product, then you are better off dealing directly with the brewery than the distributor.”

Green at The Lost Abbey sees growing popularity for distribution reps among smaller breweries, but many times that means that one person is wearing multiple hats.

“A lot of these new breweries are working without a sales rep. I know of one brewery where the brewer is literally doing everything himself,” which includes bartending, brewing, and distribution rep work. So while the distribution representative position has become more popular, sometimes this means one person wearing multiple hats; not necessarily a new hire.

According to Green, relationships work at their optimal level when vendors work with breweries and distributors in tandem. This results in win-win-win for brewery, distributor, and vendor.

“I currently work with six Stone sales reps, along with their sales manager and several others in the sales department,” Green said. “The more beer I sell for them, they benefit and, in turn, sell more beer for me and I benefit.”

As a vendor, Renna added that he gets the benefit of increased responsiveness by working with the breweries and distributors.

“The salesmen do not want to see (flagship beers pulled off tap). Five years ago, such a threat would not have gone very high up the ladder, but today I would have a regional manager calling me within hours.”

**A NEW CHALLENGER**

Tondro noted that the number of distributors and reps with whom he works has increased by nearly 50 percent within the last year, and much of the increase is due to new breweries that self-distribute.

Green countered that, by working exclusively with a brewery representative — and not partnering with a distribution company — the portfolio of beers available is more limited.

Despite such reservations about working...
with breweries exclusively, dealing directly with smaller and newer breweries becomes an increasingly viable alternative for vendors. In fact, for at least one local brewery, working directly with the brewery is the only way to get their highly sought-after beer.

“Societe is selling all the beer they can make,” said Broderick, referring to Societe Brewing Co. who, by design, only self-distributes its beer.

“It’s a privilege for me to be able to get it, as opposed to a bigger brewer who is just battling for tap space and only now realizing how valuable it is.”

For Broderick, the privilege is such that he drives to Societe to pick up the kegs himself.

“They said they’d love to sell us beer, but they couldn’t drive out to Jamul to get it to us. I said, ‘No problem, I’ll pick it up,’” and even then, Broderick is only able to pick up what beers Societe has available, but even expending this much time and effort can outweigh the indignity of dealing with hard-driving sales representatives.

“It’s such valuable space and there is so much beer to fill that space, how are you going to put on a mediocre beer by a brewery just for the chance, the lottery, or opportunity to get a select beer later?” Broderick mused.

“It’s an unrealistic goal for me to get (Russian River Brewing’s) Pliny the Elder. It’s been made clear to me by their distributor. But now it’s not an issue because there are more beers that can match Pliny. No disrespect to Pliny; it used to be the lead dog, but the rest of the pack has come up.”

The taps at Slater’s 50/50 in Liberty Station.

Photo: Ryan Lamb
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By GONZALO J. QUINTERO, ED.D.

Perhaps not in America’s Finest City, where we enjoy sunny and mild days most of the year, but in many parts of the country there are distinct visual cues that signal the change of the seasons: leaves changing color in the fall, birds flying south for the winter, flowers blooming in the spring, butterflies migrating in the summer. Identifying and studying the seasonal timing of these life cycle events is called phenology. For hundreds of years, identifying seasonal beer styles has been a clear example of how everyday people are phenologists.

Before the scientific advances of crop rotation, refrigeration and preservatives, humans were at the mercy of seasonal availability for their food. Did you want tomato sauce in the...

Fall beers grow from tradition, and innovation

BY GONZALO J. QUINTERO, ED.D.
winter? Tough luck. Sure, these days you can buy “fresh” tomatoes any time of year shipped from a part of the world you don’t live in, stockpile canned tomatoes, or easily secure jars of “home-style” pasta sauce, but prior to technological advances you only had a small window from opportunity late summer through fall to harvest your tomatoes and jar them. The same went for many ingredients used in beer; hops and grains were only available in certain regions at certain times of the year.

In the pre-Industrial Revolution many people made their living as farmers. They were phenologists by nature and foragers of the modern day seasonal beer. How so? Well, the freshness and availability of their ingredients dictated what was brewed seasonally. When the harvest season was over, and the hot days were behind them, farmers turned into brewers in the cooler fall and winter months. A stockpile of ingredients, more free time post harvest, and cooler temperatures to store their beers and the materials used to brew them meant that these farmers could focus on the craft of brewing.

Times, of course, have changed, and we’re now able to brew most any beer style during any season. So why do seasonal beers stick around? Maybe it is tradition; aside from the German purity laws, beer drinking is filled with history and ritual after all. Maybe it’s the fact that weather does help dictate taste, and you would likely want a clean and crisp kölsch in the warm spring and summer months, while you would probably prefer a heavy winter warmer around the holiday season, and not vice versa. Maybe it is just inertia: that’s the way it is, has been, and always will be. Though it is prudent to believe that seasonal styles persevere due to all of the factors above, the commercial aspect is also part of the equation.

So do breweries brew according to their customers’ seasonal tastes? Yes and no. In San Diego it has been my experience that brewers are both artists and scientists. Though they may be using their skills in the realm of business and commerce, the end beer drinker only really cares about what’s in the glass, as it should be. What a brewery puts out into the marketplace is a very personal creation that they want to see succeed for a variety of reasons. In the end, the best brewers add a whole new revenue source by selling beers in the name of seasonality, not for the sake of it.

Brewers are enabled to take chances throughout the year with new recipes, specialty casks, and other innovations. Innovation is really the inception of all beers, and the crux of the argument both for and against seasonal beers. It is simultaneously traditional and innovative to brew a seasonal beer. Fresh/wet hop ales, harvest ales, Oktoberfest beers and pumpkin ales are all examples of both traditional and innovative seasonal styles that should emerge at the time this article is published. What happens, though, when seasonality becomes cliché? The answer, quite simply, is “pushback.”

Seasonal offering at Bine & Vine. Photo: Geoi Bachua
Pushback recently hit the pumpkin beer front via a retweet from Beer Advocate: “Pumpkin beer is the modern day equivalent of the mullet. Everybody that brewed one will be ashamed of it in a decade.” This subversive statement started an online debate for and against the seasonal offerings that are pumpkin ales. As Jason Notte noted in his money.msn.com article “Why Beer Snobs Are Brawling Over Pumpkin Ale,” pumpkin ales are “one of the oldest beer (styles) in the American brewing repertoire... that (flourished) through the Colonial era, when malt was in short supply and pumpkin provided a strong source of fermentable sugars.” The fact that this seasonal beer style dates back to the founding era of these United States and emerged out of seasonal necessity makes a case for pumpkin beers as having deep traditional, and innovative, roots.

Notte hypothesized that “perhaps purists are put off by the pumpkin ales that lean heavily on pumpkin pie spices like nutmeg, cinnamon and ginger instead of actual pumpkin... there’s still enough division between the pumpkin and pumpkin pie folks to prompt an adverse reaction to the other’s beer.” Notte continued and hit the nail on the head when he pointed out the “not-so-small matter of the summer release dates of this popular fall seasonal... (and) there’s also the fact that pumpkin ale isn’t exactly a novelty anymore. There were exactly seven pumpkin ales at the Great American Beer Festival a decade ago. At last year’s event in Denver, there were 63.”

When everybody jumps on a bandwagon the perception is that innovation goes out the door, and sameness prevails. The fact that we saw many pumpkin ales hit the shelves just in time for summer barbecues was off-putting to many. Notte claimed their may have been commercial interests at stake: “Beer brewers, especially small brewers, have extremely tight margins and don’t like to have beer laying around when nobody wants it.” By kegging, bottling, and shipping beers earlier — and perhaps before other breweries making similar styles — fermentation tanks and storage space get freed up, revenues are gained, and new batches can be brewed.

It is this focus on commerce as well as the usurping of the industry’s own values that are at the heart of this debate. It’s not the taste of the beer, but the bad taste left in the mouth of the consumer that has caused this debate amongst craft beer aficionados. I do realize, however, that that is somewhat of a myopic view. Seasonality of beers, and the craft beer loving phenologists that have emerged both to produce and consume them, are at the core of this discussion. Beers are produced, and the market decides whether to greet them with a yay or nay.

Though pumpkin beers were at the center of the debate, you will see this discussion reemerge in the months to come over Christmas beers and the like. If you are bothered by the fact that many big box stores have Christmas decorations for sale in September, you’re probably the kind of person that is bothered by having a pumpkin ale available in July. The law of supply and demand is, truly, the only way to end this debate. So vote with your dollar by heading to your local bottle shop and buying something to enjoy as you watch the metaphorical leaves change color this fall.
How High Is Up?

How big can craft beer get in San Diego? That's a question being talked about plenty these days, as the region is now home to more than 70 brew houses.

According to a study released earlier this year by National University System Institute for Policy Research, craft beer in San Diego generated $680.8 million in sales in 2011, the last year with complete statistics. With the continued growth of the industry, 2012 numbers undoubtedly are larger.

So where exactly is San Diego on the growth curve? Just how big is the market anyway, and what will brewers need to do to sustain the momentum?

As a follow-up to a recent West Coaster story about the potential of a craft beer bubble, we called on two industry insiders to get their insights — Vince Vasquez, a senior policy analyst with National University who conducted the independent study, and Brian Scott, president of the San Diego Brewers Guild (he also doubles as the equipment maintenance and packaging supervisor for Karl Strauss). Here’s what they had to say:

How big is the craft beer market in San Diego? And how much more room for growth is there?

Scott: We have turned a lot of people on to craft beer, but we still have a ways to go. Craft beer represents 10% volume in San Diego and there are markets like Portland where craft beer makes up more than 20% of beer sales—that’s where we are headed.

Vasquez: We’re certainly not in our infancy, but there is definitely more room to run in terms of industry potential. And even if a large brewery gets bought by another company or decides to relocate, I think all of the equipment and jobs would be distributed throughout the local industry—it seems to be that strong and collaborative of an industry. And as a think tank, we don’t see that in every industry we look at.
What advantages does craft beer have that other industries don’t?

Vasquez: The one thing that helps the craft beer industry is that not one size fits all. And it seems the newer guys are more fleet-footed and unconventional. Not everybody wants to be Karl Strauss or Ballast Point. For some it’s about simply having a presence in a neighborhood with 10 employees and a voice in the community.

Scott: Craft beer sales are experiencing double-digit sales growth, and currently represent 10.2% of all beer sales by dollars. There is a lot of room to grow, and San Diegans have shown a passion for supporting quality, local products. As our San Diego breweries continue to put out quality beer, we believe there is still plenty of market share to grow into.

What are local brewers doing to help build San Diego craft beer as a brand?

Scott: We have put a lot of work into building awareness for our region under the San Diego Brewers Guild umbrella. The Guild was established to promote San Diego craft beer within San Diego, as well as beyond. We believe that by pooling our resources to promote our industry, we can grow our awareness and become known as the Napa for craft beer. The hard work, quality beers and awards won by our talented brewers have helped make San Diego a thriving beer scene that we are anxious to promote.
Vasquez: Look at how Napa came together as a community to create a wine destination. That’s something that San Diego certainly could emulate. Can someone from Topeka, Kansas, clearly articulate what makes San Diego craft beer unique? They probably can about Napa wine. It’s all about highlighting an industry in one region, and that’s the power of marketing and branding.

What obstacles could impede the growth of craft beer?

Vasquez: Having the bigger breweries saying that what they are making is craft when it’s not. That’s a real serious threat to this industry. From my perspective as a consumer, you are seeing a blending of what craft beer really is. Posers are coming in and they are getting away with it. Only the beer geeks and the industry guys are the ones calling them out on it, but what about your typical consumer? If you see Budweiser’s idea of a craft beer next to a Ballast Point Sculpin, will there be some who will be fooled? You need a mechanism (such as certification) that allows for those who are making real craft beer to be identified as such.

Scott: I foresee a couple obstacles. There is definitely the issue of the macros - Bud, Miller, Coors - trying to blur the line on what is a craft beer. But the craft beer consumer is savvy. Craft beer stands for more than quality. Craft stands for local craftsmanship, pride, craft stands for community involvement, it stands for local economic development, it stands for more jobs, and most craft brewers stand for sustainability. Craft beer consumers want to support all of that in addition to knowing who is brewing their beer. The craft beer consumer appreciates the hand-crafted effort to put out the best beer possible made from the finest ingredients, not short cuts just to gain volume and dollar advantages. The other obstacle is natural market supply and demand. Craft breweries use the best malts and hops and as the number of breweries grow, the demand for these ingredients may outweigh the supply. Plus, the speed of retail adoption is lagging the growth of new breweries. There is a real need for retail education and the loosening of the Big 3 on the big box retailers to allow more craft on the shelf. It’s tough to get more craft sku’s on the grocery shelf when a macro is setting the schematic. Retailers are savvy too though and they are coming around.

They see the consumer demand and you will definitely notice a difference today than five years ago. We just need it to transition quicker.

How important is craft beer tourism to the sustainability of the San Diego market?

Scott: Tourism is huge in San Diego. Our economic impact as an industry is starting to gain recognition, and as we continue to win more medals and put out top-notch beers, we can see tourism growing even more.

Vasquez: The largest craft brewing event in the region is San Diego Beer Week. It brings more than 20,000 participants to the county. Our study found that the 2011 Beer Week generated 3,612 hotel room nights and $469,307 in additional hotel revenue. (In 2012, the event brought in an estimated $780,000 in hotel revenue).

In light of San Diego Beer Week funding cuts from the Tourism Marketing District, are there any collaborative marketing efforts among breweries?

Scott: We are working with our Guild members to rally around San Diego Beer Week to promote our craft to the city and beyond. In particular, we are working with the breweries to really promote the official kick-off event, the Guild Festival, because this is our major source of revenue for the coming year. The Guild is working diligently to help provide member brewers with the promotional tools they need to generate awareness and buzz for San Diego Beer Week, the Festival, and their own businesses.

So what’s next for craft beer in San Diego?

Vasquez: There has to be some strategic planning on an industry-wide level to really decide where craft beer wants to go from here. It’s going to be challenging.

Scott: We have doubled the number of breweries in San Diego in the past four years. That is great. The growth is very rapid, but beer sales and tasting room visits have shown that consumers support this number of breweries and local commerce. As a guild, we want to advocate smart growth with a continued focus on quality and continue to live up to the world-class reputation San Diego has created.
On an uncommonly sweltering Friday night in Balboa Park, the San Diego History Center (SDHC) hosted an uncommon event: Homebrew Happy Hour. This event was part of the History Happy Hour series held at the ongoing Bottled & Kegged: San Diego’s Craft Brew Culture exhibit.

Homebrew Happy Hour was a collaborative effort between SDHC’s Matt Schiff and Nicole George and club organizer Stan Sisson, who gathered members from clubs including QuAFF, Mash Heads, Foam On The Brain, Society of Barley Engineers, and North County Homebrewers Association.

If you’re wondering why homebrewers were highlighted at an exhibit mostly featuring commercial breweries, it’s because San Diego’s brewing success derives straight from its homebrew roots. AleSmith’s owner Peter Zien, for example, is a former president of QuAFF.

Homebrewers provide San Diego brewers with indispensable help in tasting rooms through honest feedback, troubleshooting when there are issues, and also giving plenty of support when something is brewed well. Homebrewers are able to push the envelope, not worried about big losses in materials and time, and they keep commercial brewers on their toes. Most of the pros in San Diego started as homebrewers and some pros run small homebrew pilot batches in order to hone their more creative and delightfully strange batches on a homebrew scale.

For these reasons, the event had completely sold out more than a week prior, and the excitement was palpable in the sultry air. Over 200 attendees filled the SDHC ready to sample a plethora of small batch artisanal tipples from many of San Diego’s most talented homebrewers.

When attendees entered the large space, the perimeter of which was laced with homebrewers serving at jockey box stations, they seemed a bit timid and overwhelmed. Those feelings dissipated upon getting their first drink. I saw their eyes light right up as I handed them beer; the first drink was met with “This is really good! Did you brew this?”

As people slowly circumnavigated the museum rooms, they got more adventurous. Noses really got stuck deep into the tasting glasses, and the full sensory experience of a well-crafted brew was achieved with the help of posted signs at each station that described the beers’ stats: OG (original gravity), FG (final gravity), ABV (alcohol by volume), IBUs (international bitterness units), and SRM (standard reference method for beer color). This kept everyone engaged and would often help spark conversations with the brewers on hand.

“I’ve never heard of (insert beer style). What’s it like?”
“What’s a beer engine?”
“What’s a mead?”

There was plenty for everyone to explore as they walked around the museum with a beer in hand.

Harold Gulbransen demonstrated how mouthfeel can alter the way a beer is perceived by serving an American Pale Ale on cask, nitro, and CO2. Liz and Curtis Chism poured a refreshing Saison. Chris Banker presented his excellent Black Currant Cider. George Thornton offered a well-balanced Belgian Amber. Mary Anne Bixby’s passion flower buckwheat honey mead was mind-blowing. Kelsey McNair threw down with his Hop Fu, an IPA that brings home a new medal and ribbon every week it seems. Jenny and Eric DuRose had a toasty malt Steam Beer that showed the lineage of the style. There was so much on tap: ESB, Wet Hopped IPA, Coconut Brown, Kolsch Style, Calypso IPA, and Mocha Porter to name some.

As the night went on I was happy to see people sharing the contents of their glasses.

They advised other attendees — both those they’d come with as well as new friends they made on the night — on what to try before the event was over.

What made the party even more fun was that it was my birthday, and hey, what better way to spend it than sharing beer with friends and geeking out with my extended brewing family. I got the opportunity to serve my Sir Maxwell English Mild on a beer engine. I did an impromptu pairing with some figs from my tree at home, topped with slivers of Noord Hollander cheese. I also poured my Vanishing Cookie Oatmeal Stout infused with Madagascar Vanilla Bean and a custom blend of Sumatra Volkopi Blue & El Salvador El Naranjo Coffee. I broke out some vanilla ice cream and served these as floats towards the tail end of the event.

Everyone who attended really enjoyed themselves and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic. Here are some quotes I heard and overheard:

“This beer tastes like my favorite IPA, but three times better.”
“I’ve never heard of an English Mild. Can I try it?”
“I usually hate ciders, but I’m lovin’ this one.”
“This pairing is delicious.”
“Somebody told me that this was the beer to try.”
“I’ve never had a mead before tonight. It’s awesome!”
“This IPA is amazeballs.”

The Homebrew Happy Hour could not have run smoother. In fact, it was so successful there’s been talk of another one happening down the road.

Who knows, maybe homebrewing just might catch on in San Diego? Ha!

**Bottle & Kegged: San Diego’s Craft Brew Culture** opened April 6, 2013 and will run to January 20, 2014. The History Happy Hour on Friday, September 27 will see Dr. Chris White discussing how yeast plays a big role in the flavor of beer. Then on Friday, November 1 Stone Brewing Co. will help kick off San Diego Beer Week with the last History Happy Hour. For tickets to these events, visit sandiegohistory.org
OCTOBEER EVENTS
View more @ westcoastersd.com/event-calendar

OCTOBER 5
OKTOBERFEST @ THE BLAIR BARS
50+ German and German-inspired ales, food specials, keep-the-glass deals, a costume contest, and a bus making stops at Hamilton's, Monkey Paw, and Small Bar (hamiltonstavern.com)

TASTE OF NORTH PARK
Try out 40 restaurants and beers from 12 breweries for $35 (or $40 at the door) during this self-guided walking tour all over North Park (tastenorthpark.com)

2ND ANNUAL RHYTHM & BREWS
All nine of Vista’s breweries will be pouring, alongside several more local and regional players; $30 (or $35 at the door) gets you 10 tasters (vvba.org)

OCTOBER 6
BEER FOR BOOBS FUNDRAISER @ SAN DIEGO BREW PROJECT
Enjoy a triple tap takeover featuring Rip Current, Societe and AleSmith. $10 presale tickets (or $15 at the door) buys you two local beers in a Beer 4 Boobs pink cup and a raffle ticket; proceeds benefit breast cancer research. Tickets available via sdbrewproject.com

OCTOBER 12
IRON FIST ANNIVERSARY PARTY
Celebrate the Vista brewery’s third birthday; $25 tickets available only at the tasting room include an anniversary glass and eight tasters. Enjoy special draft releases, a raffle and local food trucks.

OCTOBER 12 - 13
LA JOLLA ART & WINE FESTIVAL
100% of proceeds from this event ($5 cash donation accepted at all entrances) go to underfunded programs at local area public schools. This year, Ballast Point, Stone, Green Flash, Belching Beaver and Lightning Brewery round out the list of local breweries at the beer garden, open Saturday noon to 7 p.m. and Sunday noon to 6 p.m. Tastings are $3 each or 7 for $20. Visit ljawf.org

OCTOBER 19
LATITUDE 33 HUMPTOBERFEST
This second annual event showcases the Vista brewery’s Camel Corps IPA line: Camel Corp, Double Hump, Dry Hump (seasonal), Wet Hump (seasonal), Spicy Camel and Camelima. Beers are regular price and admission is free from 12 to 8 p.m. Costume contest starts at 4 p.m. Visit lat33brew.com

OCTOBER 26
HOPTOBERFEST @ PIZZA PORT SAN CLEMENTE
More than 40 hoppy beers will be flowing just north of San Diego; $30 tickets include a commemorative glass and eight four-ounce tasters. Extra tickets are $1 each. Ride a bus from Pizza Port OB, Solana Beach, Carlsbad or Bressi Ranch for an additional $25. Visit facebook.com/PortSanClemente

BARREL HARBOR GRAND OPENING
Vista’s newest brewery opened in September, and will host their grand opening this month. At time of press there weren’t many details, so be sure to check out barrelharborbrewing.com for more info.

THROUGHOUT OCTOBER
GREEN FLASH TREASURE CHEST EVENTS
Brewery co-founder and VP of Marketing Lisa Hinkley is a three-year breast cancer survivor, and in 2011 established Treasure Chest as an annual fundraising program to benefit local breast cancer charities; all proceeds from the September 7 Treasure Chest Fest were donated to Susan G Komen for the Cure San Diego. Upcoming Treasure Chest Belgian Brown release events include October 2 at The Regal Seagull, October 6 at Lumberyard Tavern & Grill, October 7 at Hamilton’s Tavern, October 11 at Churchill’s Pub and Grille, and a Treasure Chest Brunch for the Cure at CUCINA urbana on November 3.
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M is for Mother Earth

This glossary of terms comes straight from the beer educators at CraftBeer.com, with San Diego breweries added in bold.

Malt - Processed barley that has been steeped in water, germinated on malting floors or in germination boxes or drums, and later dried in kilns for the purpose of converting the insoluble starch in barley to the soluble substances and sugars in malt.

Malt Extract - A thick syrup or dry powder prepared from malt and sometimes used in brewing.

Manzanita Brewing - This Santee-based brewery recently started distilling spirits. You can find their Witch’s Hair Pumpkin Ale - the featured beer in this month’s Plates & Pints on pages 24 & 25 - starting October 2.

Mash - A mixture of ground malt (and possibly other grains or adjuncts) and hot water that forms the sweet wort after straining.

Mash Tun - The vessel in which grist is soaked in water and heated in order to convert the starch to sugar and to extract the sugars, colors, flavors, and other solubles from the grist.

Mashing - The process of mixing crushed malt (and possibly other grains or adjuncts) with hot water to convert grain starches to fermentable sugars and non-fermentable carbohydrates that will add body, head retention, and other characteristics to the beer. Mashing also extracts colors and flavors that will carry through to the finished beer, and also provides for the degradation of haze-forming proteins. Mashing requires several hours and produces a sugar-rich liquid called wort.

Microbrewery - As defined by the Brewers Association: A brewery that produces less than 15,000 barrels of beer per year with 75% or more of its beer sold off.

Milling - The grinding of malt into grist (or meal) to facilitate the extraction of sugars and other soluble substances during the mash process. The endosperm must be crushed to medium-sized grits rather than to flour consistency. It is important that the husks remain intact when the grain is milled or cracked because they will later act as a filter aid during lautering.

Mission Brewery - In late September the East Village brewery started packaging 32 oz. cans of their Conquistador Extra Pale Ale in the 14,000 square foot facility.

Modern Times - One of San Diego’s newest breweries, Modern Times just announced a monthly homebrew competition that allows for unlimited entries and has no ingredient restrictions or style guidelines. The first contest happens October 21.

Modification - 1. The physical and chemical changes in barley that result from malting, especially the development of enzymes that are required to modify the grain’s starches into sugars during mashing, and also the physical changes that render the carbohydrate found in barley kernels more available to the brewing process. 2. The degrees to which these changes have occurred, as determined by the growth of the acrospire.

Monkey Paw - This summer the East Village brewery and pub teamed up with local non-profit LOVELIKEBEER to create a new menu item, the Mumbai Monkey vegan sandwich, with 10% of proceeds going to Ferdinand’s Familia all species animal rescue.

Mother Earth - Vista’s largest brewery is set to increase production threefold with the addition of an oversized 20 BBL brewhouse from Premier Stainless.

Mouthfeel - Synonym for body of a beer, weight on the tongue, perceived carbonation (sensation), perceived warmth (alcohol), and perceived astringency.

Musty - Moldy, mildewy character that can be the result of cork or bacterial infection in a beer. It can be perceived in both taste and aroma.
With more breweries per capita than any other city in the USA, Vista is home to the Vista Brewers Guild, whose members scored 9 awards at the 2013 San Diego International Beer Festival. Visit us online or better yet, visit our breweries and taste the bounty of brews Vista’s brewers offer.

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