ADJOURNED
THE RISE AND FALL OF COUNCIL BREWING
BOOZE BROTHERS BREWING CO.
THE WC TEAM

PUBLISHER  MIKE SHESS
mike@westcoastersd.com

EXECUTIVE EDITOR  RYAN LAMB
ryan@westcoastersd.com

EDITOR-AT-LARGE  BRANDON HERNÁNDEZ
brandon@westcoastersd.com

ART DIRECTOR  KAYLA COLEMAN
kayla@westcoastersd.com

MEDIA CONSULTANT  TOM SHESS
thomas.shess@gmail.com

WRITERS & PHOTOGRAPHERS  BETH DEMMON
BRANDON HERNÁNDEZ
IAN CHEESMAN
JUAN MARTINEZ
KRISTINA YAMAMOTO
MIKE SHESS
RYAN LAMB
TIM STAHL

TOUCH BASE WITH US:
info@westcoastersd.com

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ON THE COVER:
A pour of Council Brewing Beer.
Photo by Juan Martinez
BREWS IN THE NEWS
BREWS IN THE NEWS
BREWS IN THE NEWS
## Local Events

**February 1-3 — Fri.-Sun.**
- 2 Year Anniversary Weekend at Kilowatt Brewing Ocean Beach

**February 1 — Friday**
- Art Gallery Opening Night: La Boheme and the Cactus at Culture Brewing Ocean Beach
- Art Gallery Opening Night: Greg Cain at Culture Brewing Encinitas
- Art Gallery Opening Night: Taylor Reeve at Culture Brewing Solana Beach
- Hops on the Harbor Beer Pairing Dinner Cruise with Burgeon Beer

**February 2 — Saturday**
- Changing of the Barrels (30th Anniversary Party) at Karl Strauss Brewing Co.
- 6th Anniversary & Sour Saturday at Fathom Bistro Bait & Tackle
- Intro to Homebrewing at The Homebrewer
- 6th Anniversary Celebration at Rip Current Brewing

**February 3 — Sunday**
- Anniversary Beer Pairing with Nomad Donuts at Kilowatt Brewing Ocean Beach

**February 4 — Monday**
- Valentine’s Sale with So Rich! Chocolates at Tap That Oceanside

**February 5 — Tuesday**
- Articulate Pop-Up Shop at Culture Brewing Solana Beach

**February 6 — Wednesday**
- DIY Macrame Class with Patchwork at Culture Brewing Encinitas

**February 8-10 — Fri.-Sun.**
- 2nd Anniversary Weekend at Pariah Brewing

**February 8 — Friday**
- Hops on the Harbor Beer Pairing Dinner Cruise with Burgeon Beer

**February 9 — Saturday**
- Second Saturday with Karl Strauss & Drake’s at Hamiltons Tavern
- 10th Annual Brewbies Fundraise Fest at Bagby Beer Oceanside
- Craft & Cocoa Brewer’s Dinner at Rock Bottom La Jolla
- Chocolate Workshop with Andrea's Truffles at Eppig Point Loma

**February 10 — Sunday**
- Brewin’ with Chuck (Double Hazy IPA) at Longship Brewery
- Beer Pairing with So Rich! Chocolates at Dos Desperados San Marcos

**February 11 — Tuesday**
- Wulumae Pop-Up Shop at Culture Brewing Solana Beach

**February 12 — Tuesday**
- Wulumae Pop-Up Shop at Culture Brewing Encinitas
- Wing Wednesday with Good Seed Food Co at Second Chance North Park

**February 13 — Wednesday**
- Valentine’s Day Beer Dinner at Viewpoint Brewing Del Mar
- Valentine’s Day Chocolate Pairings with Good Seed Food Co at Thunderhawk Elements
- Truffle and Beer Pairing with Andrea’s Truffles at Eppig North Park

**February 14 — Thursday**
- Wulumae Pop-Up Shop at Culture Brewing Solana Beach

**February 15 — Friday**
- Cookie and Beer Pairing with Michael Cardoza at Burning Beard Brewing
- Hops on the Harbor Beer Pairing Dinner Cruise with Burgeon Beer

**February 16 — Saturday**
- Modern Times Carnival of Caffeination at Jacobs Center
- One Year Anniversary Party at Wild Barrel Brewing
- Pints for Pangolins (World Pangolin Day) at Second Chance North Park

**February 17 — Sunday**
- 5th Annual SD Fermentation Festival at Coastal Roots Farm

**February 18 — Monday**
- DIY Macrame Class with Patchwork at Culture Brewing Ocean Beach

**February 19 — Tuesday**
- Intro to Homebrewing at The Homebrewer

**February 22 — Friday**
- Hops on the Harbor Beer Pairing Dinner Cruise with Burgeon Beer

**February 23 — Saturday**
- 6 Year Anniversary Party at Culture Brewing Solana Beach
- French Toast Pajama Party with Good Seed Food Co at Longship Brewery
- Walkabout featuring Chocolate at Miralani Makers District

**February 24 — Sunday**
- Trashy Hour Clean up Event at Home Brewing Co.

**February 26 — Tuesday**
- Off-Flavor Course at White Labs

**February 27 — Wednesday**
- Wing Wednesday with Good Seed Food Co at Second Chance North Park

**March 1 — Friday**
- Firkin Friday with AleSmith Juice Stand IPA at Hamiltons Tavern
- Hops on the Harbor Beer Pairing Dinner
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<td>1 Scientist, 1 Artist Walk Into a Bar (Presented by RH Fleet) at 25 Locations</td>
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<td>MARCH 8</td>
<td>Hops on the Harbor Beer Pairing Dinner Cruise with Modern Times Beer</td>
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<td>MARCH 9</td>
<td>Second Saturday with CANarchy (Cigar City, Oskar Blues, 3 Weavers) at Hamiltons Tavern</td>
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<td>Brewin’ with Chuck: Belgian Tripel with Hibiscus at Longship Brewery</td>
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<td>Sour Beer Essentials (Webinar Available) at White Labs</td>
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<td>MARCH 15</td>
<td>Lab Practicum: Putting Your Yeast Essentials Knowledge to Work at White Labs</td>
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<td>Pickled Pairing Flight with Good Seed Food Co at Societe Brewing</td>
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<td>APRIL 27</td>
<td>9th Annual Mission Valley Craft Beer and Food Festival</td>
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<td>MAY 3</td>
<td>Hops on the Harbor Beer Pairing Dinner Cruise with Mother Earth Brew Co.</td>
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<td>MAY 4</td>
<td>2019 SD Brewers Guild Rhythm &amp; Brews Festival at Historic Vista Village</td>
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Include your events in next month’s calendar for free! Email: info@westcoastersd.com
Rock Bottom La Jolla Craft & Cocoa Brewer’s Dinner
Join Head Brewer Dan Anderson and Chef Alberto Lucatero on Saturday, February 9. After a welcome beer, enjoy these pairings:
- Very Berry Salad with Chocolate Vinaigrette, paired with Epic Joyride White IPA
- Eggplant Caponata with Grated Chocolate, paired with White Mountain Brown Ale
- Chocolate Mole Chicken Enchiladas, paired with Surfers Solitude Red Ale
- Cocoa Rubbed Pork Chop, paired with Return to Hazeland IPA
- Homemade Porter & Espresso Tiramisu, paired with Padfoot Porter

Andrea’s Truffles Events
In business since 2012, Andrea’s Truffles works with, and distributes to, a variety of local breweries and beverage businesses.
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9:
Chocolate Workshop at Eppig Waterfront Biergarten Point Loma (1 - 3 p.m.)
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10:
Chocolate Workshop at You & Yours Distilling (1 - 3 p.m.)
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14:
Truffle and Beer Pairing at Eppig Brewing North Park (5 - 7 p.m.)
Wine and Chocolate Pairing at Charlie & Echo (6:30 - 7:30 p.m.)

So Rich! Chocolate Events
In addition to these events at beer and wine spots, So Rich! is available at Wild Barrel Brewing, both Belching Beaver Vista locations, Tap That Oceanside, and Beach House Winery Oceanside.
STARTING MONDAY, FEBRUARY 4:
Special Valentine’s Chocolates Available for Sale at Tap That Oceanside
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10:
Chocolate and Beer Pairing at Dos Desperados San Marcos (2 - 4 p.m.)
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15:
Chocolate, Wine and Cigar Pairing at Beach House Winery, Oceanside (6 - 9 p.m.)

Cookies on Tap
Three local brewery partners share pairing proceeds with Girl Scouts of San Diego from these events Friday, February 22 through Sunday, February 24. Please note that only the breweries below are official partners with the Girl Scouts.
STONE (KETTNER, OCEANSIDE, J STREET, ESCONDIDO, LIBERTY STATION)
- Stone White Geist Berliner Weisse with Savannah Smiles
- Stone Tropic of Thunder Lager with Samoas
- Mikhail (Stone Totalitarian Imperial Russian Stout aged in Bourbon Barrels) with S’mores
- Enter Night Pilsner with Thin Mints
ALESMITH BREWING CO.
- Spezial Pils (German-style pilsner) with Trefoils Girl Scout Cookies
- Nut Brown Ale (English style) with S’mores
- AleSmith IPA (India pale ale) with Savannah Smiles
- Speedway Stout with Coffee (Imperial Stout) with Tagalongs.
MIKE HESS BREWING
Each Mike Hess Brewing (MHB) location — North Park, Miramar, Ocean Beach, and Imperial Beach — will have the following pairings:
- Habitus Double Rye IPA with Samoas
- Hop Cloud Hazy IPA with Savannah Smiles
- Grazias Vienna Cream Ale with Do-si-dos
- Umbrix Imperial Stout with S’mores
Additional, MHB North Park and Imperial Beach pairs Steel Beach Lager with Trefoils; MHB Miramar pairs White Peach My Other Vice Berliner Weisse with Trefoils; and MHB Ocean Beach pairs into the Sunset Blood Orange IPA with Tagalongs.
Boat Shoes Hazy IPA has flavors of citrus and sweet fruit that linger through a juicy finish. This intensely hopped, unfiltered brew pairs perfectly with your nautical lifestyle, actual boat not required.

HANDCRAFTED BEER
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
IT is a curious thing walking into Council Brewing Co. in 2019. Despite shuttering a month ago, very little has changed. There’s still beer in the barrels and a neat row of barstools ready to be filled. It feels like all it would take is illuminating the “OPEN” sign to draw passerby in for a pint of Bully Pulpit IPA and the world would spin on for this brewery. Of course, things are more complicated than that.

December 15th, 2018 officially marked the cessation of Council Brewing Co. It seemed to come out of nowhere, but per the Facebook post announcing the same, it was a decision that had weighed on co-owners Liz and Curtis Chism for quite some time. I don’t think it’s hyperbole to say the statement sent a considerable tremor through the local beer scene. Most reacted with an outpouring of support and by sharing fond memories with the brand, but I found myself more vexed than anything. What undid this Kearny Mesa brewing institution?

Perhaps the armchair CPAs of the world were correct in quipping that the business had expanded too fast, but the dearth of nuance in such statements gnawed at me. I wagered the arc of Council Brewing Co. had something more to teach, or at least a more personal story to tell. If nothing else, I wanted to properly memorialize the efforts that had enriched San Diego’s beersphere for half a decade.

As is the story for the opening of so many San Diego breweries, the Council Brewing Co. endeavor began with a passion for homebrewing and the spark of entrepreneurship. Their burgeoning talent found recognition in awards through local club QUAFF, the San Diego County Fair’s homebrew competition, and the National Homebrew Competition, which is to say nothing of the appreciation dispensed by those called upon to drink down the Chism’s supply. All it took was a friend approaching Curtis with the idea to partner up on starting a brewery back in 2012 for the dream to finally take shape.

Those keen on arithmetic will note the two-year gap between this event and the opening of Council Brewing Co. in mid-2014. This expanse was marked by exploring various possible locales (with a couple of false starts), dissolution of the original partnership, selling their home to provide additional funds for build out, and the onboarding of a new investor/partner. Despite the chaotic road to Kearny Mesa, they were operating loan-free and ready to serve a surprisingly eager public with their three-barrel brewhouse. “We opened up and, to our shock, people showed up and packed out the place,” said Curtis.

While early sales were meeting expectations, the waters were far from calm for the Chisms. In their first month they were already addressing flaws in their brewing process, as well as tending to the complexities of a mixed fermentation sour program. All of that would have been chaotic enough without their new partner opting to “quit unexpectedly,” leading to a buyout and the cessation of the second financial relationship for the brewery.

Though the Chisms could not have known it at the time, the happenings of those first six weeks would prove to define the trajectory of their business. The most immediate was the arrival of the tart saisons that would later be known as the Beatitude series. It proved all too apt a name, as it blessed the business with a surge of recognition and an unexpectedly rabid fanbase. “We wouldn’t even announce [releases] on social media...within two hours, boom, 60 cases would go,” said Curtis.

After establishing the “magic slurry” feeding Beatitude produced consistent, flavorful (and coveted) beer, the Chisms decided to scale up production and extend its reach out of the tasting room. One micro-loan later, the Magic Factory facility was born. It proved so successful that by January of 2016 they were already refinancing that loan to upgrade their brewing setup, vastly augment cellar needs, and acquire bottling equipment to help boost the reach of the program.

On the whole, life was good for Council Brewing Co. in 2016. The business was in the black as it had been in the previous year, even on the back of loan payments and the Chisms striving to pay themselves a salary. Beatitude had proven a successful way to enter new markets as their distribution grew. However, midway through that year, there was a notable downturn in its sales throughout Southern California. This could have had multiple causes, but they saw a surge in popularity of kettle sours as a likely culprit. Beatitude, a mixed fermentation brew, had trouble competing in a marketplace where there wasn’t sufficient consumer understanding of how much more time- and labor-intensive it was to produce than its new stylistic rival. It made Beatitude’s price point feel inflated, especially among those that actually mistook it for kettle soured.

While this was an undeniable setback, it was by no means a crisis. Their tasting room
sales had grown 10% year over year since opening, which represented the majority of their revenue and somewhat buffered them from distribution fluctuations. Eventually they found eager national and even international markets to make use of the supply they had already generated. But as the sour category continued to slow into 2017, the Chisms knew their business had to further evolve.

Council Brewing Co.’s new strategy for 2018 was to try their hand at the bustling market for large batch IPAs, a seemingly timely decision relative to the ongoing hype surrounding hazy IPAs. This shift in approach required brewing capacity beyond their existing setup, which they addressed by contracting brews through another local brewery. This initially proved a prudent approach, with cans of their In The Blind hazy IPA selling quickly at the tasting room and receiving ravenous demand from their distribution network. It would have been an unequivocal success, were it not for one small wrinkle. “Once the IPAs hit, [distributors] pretty much stopped ordering the sours,” lamented Curtis.

This was something of a double whammy; it was one thing to have half of the business potentially ebb and flow, but quite another to upend that pipeline with a product whose margins — particularly after the added overhead cost of contract brewing — were far leaner. Still, they appeared to have another hit on their hands, so business proceeded with an increased urgency around bolstering their presence in the local market.

It must have seemed a bit of serendipity when the Finest Made Ales facility in Santee came up for sale, because the Chisms had already been exploring East County for possible satellite tasting room sites. Further, this was essentially a turnkey brewing operation, removing the contract brewing variable from the equation (and at a price that barely edged past their established tasting room budget). Taking possession of the facility in March of 2018 allowed them to address the backlog of orders for their clean beers and fortify their direct sales. Unfortunately, this victory would prove to be offset by an uncanny volume of setbacks.

Beginning in May, one distributor after another wreaked havoc on both their financials and their production. Some suddenly slashed their standing orders in half. Others indicated they would pass on a shipment, but fully intended to reorder the following...
month. In many cases, those assurances were as empty as the previous month's order. This was particularly troublesome, since logistics demanded cans be ordered and beers get brewed well in advance of these orders to fulfill them. While some of that packaged beer could be offloaded through local sales, much of it was effectively drain-bound due to an IPA's narrow lifespan for quality.

Complications beyond those of capricious distributors compounded the Chism's headaches. The opening of the Santee tasting room was followed by a dramatic downturn in traffic to their Kearny Mesa location. They had anticipated some cannibalization of their business as existing patrons opted to visit the new location, but they encountered nearly double the percentage hit that their industry peers had projected. Clearly, something more was afoot, because even signature events such as Talk Like A Pirate Day were down 40% from the previous year. To add insult to injury, a healthy sales channel through China ultimately dropped to zero when the country announced a 25% tariff on American beer in retaliation for U.S. tariffs. Even if they could ignore how "demoralizing" it all was, the cumulative financial impact of losing tens of thousands of dollars month over month was catastrophic. “It happened so fast that we just couldn't recover from it,” said Curtis.

The looming close of the year brought everything into sharp focus. Courtesy of New Year’s Resolutions, they knew they could bank on the usual slump in January sales. They couldn’t reasonably assume February would be much better either, given the recent track record of diminishing returns on their marketing efforts. While many would look to an investor to stay afloat in similar circumstances, that option no longer interested them, especially at a juncture where the devalued business would likely not produce the most equitable terms. Add to that the realization that in five years of business they had paid themselves less than 50% of the time, and in some months, that pay wasn’t even sufficient to cover rent on their home. But the real line in the sand was their firm commitment to paying their employees. Once that was in jeopardy, the decision essentially made itself.

There’s an understandable compulsion to review the myriad decisions that led Council Brewing Co. to its terminus with the wisdom of hindsight, but that sort of analysis lacks the context of the moments that forged them. For example, it's trivial to observe that a more conservative expansion of the Magic Factory would have decreased their reliance on the distribution channels that ultimately injured the business. However, it was the success of that endeavor that allowed Council Brewing Co. to do things like hire brewing staff. That only sounds like an indulgence until you discover it still wasn't help enough to prevent Liz from needing to return to work the same day she gave birth to their daughter. All that can really be said is they saw opportunities to do more than keep the business afloat and pursued them to mixed outcomes.

Whether their brand lost its cachet in a world rife with newer, shinier options, or the ever-ominous market saturation came a-calling, the Chisms prefer to focus on what they managed to accomplish. “We tried to build a place that’s like a town council where people come together, deliberate, debate, have conversations, [and] forge new friendships,” said Curtis.

“Curtis and I did our jobs,” added Liz.
LEVEL 30
COMPLETE
HAZY
IPA
"IT'S DANGEROUS TO GO ALONE. DRINK THIS!"

LEVEL 30 COMPLETE is a hazy IPA brewed with Simcoe, Cascade, Mosaic, and Amarillo hops. Citrus and sweet fruit aromas are backed by a juicy finish.

1989's greatest creation had to be the Game Boy — but hey, the opening of a couple scrappy breweries could be a close second. Karl Strauss + Drake's = just a couple of friends celebrating their 30th anniversaries.

7.0% ABV
WALK into South Park Brewing Company on any given day and it’s likely to be full of couples sharing a flight and some tacos, families playing board games, and a handful of ubiquitous beer nerds gearing up to head to Hamilton’s Tavern next door. The pint-sized pub’s five-barrel brewing system is only separated from the dining area by a low wall, so it’s hard to miss any activity by the brew team of owner Scot Blair, head brewer Ryan Sullivan, and assistant brewer Anyaa Carter.

Carter’s journey into the industry started in 2016 when she joined the South Park team as a beertender after leaving her previous job in security. However, she admits that the requisite customer service aspect wasn’t her biggest strength, nor was it where she wanted to end up.

“Women behind the bar aren’t as valued as they should be,” Carter says. “I just knew this wasn’t my ceiling.”

So when former brewer Ryan Traylor left South Park for an opportunity at Karl Strauss, Carter stepped up and told Blair she’d like to move into the brewhouse. “I remember the moment very distinctly,” she reminisces. “I couldn’t believe that I was just like ‘I want to do it.’ It was kind of an out-of-body thing because I’m just not like that.”

It paid off; Sullivan and Carter have been brewing together ever since, keeping the 13 in-house taps pouring with a rotating selection of original brews. The collaborative nature of the job means each member works to their skill set (“Blair is doing all the recipe writing, Ryan’s doing most of the actual, physical brewing side of it, and I’m doing more of what leads up to brew day.”) Carter sees the shared workload as a benefit, allowing them to roughly double their output in 2018 from the previous year by her estimate.

When I ask her about her future plans, she’s not shy about her ambition. “I’m kind of playing with the idea of whether I want to own my own place, but I don’t necessarily think it would be in San Diego,” citing the amount of competition already established. But she admits: “I don’t want to just be a shift brewer. I don’t want to just be a lead brewer. I want to have something more than that.”

Competition aside, Carter’s fully aware of the challenges she faces in the world of beer. “For me to really hit my mark in this industry, I’m going to have to push myself — especially as a black woman in this industry. I’m going to have to push myself a little harder than other people in beer.”

It’s no secret that women are still outnumbered by men in the craft beer industry. But even as the numbers slowly rise, Carter...
points to the lack of women in leadership positions as a bigger cause for concern. “What hurts the industry as a whole is that there’s not women further up beyond a certain point, [they’re] not in the room making decisions... there’s just not a natural progression like there is for a man right now.”

Carter speaks honestly and directly, although she admits that can be risky in today’s climate. “Nowadays, everyone has an opinion about everything. I find myself having to be really careful about that because I am a woman and people may perceive what I say as something that reflects on South Park Brewing. I don’t want to seem combative because I’m a woman. As hard as I have to work for my respect, I have to pick and choose what I put out there.”

She echoes a common criticism of the beer industry today: that no one’s talking about what’s wrong, only what’s right, due to fear of alienation, offending someone, or severing a relationship over a difference of opinion in a market where relationships are everything.

Throughout the course of the interview, Carter and I at times respectfully disagree with one another when it comes to heavy topics in the beer community. But it’s the respectful part that Carter wishes would make a comeback. And as much as it seems like a long-gone luxury to agree-to-disagree, she understands that no matter what, the spotlight’s on her.

“I was even hesitant to do this interview because [I thought] ‘what do I have to say that’s important?’ But on the other side, I have to realize that I do have something to say that’s important. I do have the responsibility to at least put myself out there so that other women know that they can get somewhere in this industry... I know people are paying attention to what happens in my trajectory because I’m visible.”

She sips her beer and muses aloud.

“Do I have what it takes to be a mentor? Am I going to take the chances to open a brewery? Am I going to take the chances to put myself and my ideas out there?” I, for one, can’t wait to see how she answers those questions.

Know someone who deserves to be featured in an upcoming column? Nominate them by emailing beth@bethdemmon.com.
West Coaster readers voted Kelsey McNair of North Park Beer Co. San Diego's Best Brewer of 2018. When told the news, McNair revealed he didn’t vote for himself: “I voted for Travis Smith,” he said, referring to Societe’s brewmaster who won in 2014. “In all seriousness, I have way too much left to learn to have such an honor bested upon me.” We asked McNair to put his humility to the side and answer a few questions for us.

**How would you sum up 2018?**

Philosophically speaking, 2018 was a year of breaking out of my comfort zone and not being complacent. I spent a lot of time analyzing our processes and working with my team to figure out where we could make improvements. Sometimes this resulted in taking a couple of steps backward in order to take several steps forward. Ultimately, I believe that the efforts have resulted in some great strides in quality for our new beers and mainstays alike.

We also brewed several collaborations, which meant a lot of brainstorming, sharing our methods for various processes with other brewers, learning how other brewers were doing various processes, and ultimately learning new things together. From my perspective, each collaboration brew should be a knowledge building opportunity for everyone involved. A successful collaboration can be so much more than just getting together and making a beer.

**How does your location, on a prime North Park corner, impact what you choose to brew?**

One of the things that I have had to accept is that I need to try and please as many people as possible with our beer portfolio. This means making beer that people want without compromising on my values as a brewer (most of the time... there was that charcoal glitter thing we made for Comic-Con, which is going to haunt me forever).

We continued to brew a lot of traditional beer styles, but I did set aside the BJCP style guidelines at times and embraced more “free form” brewing which included making some fun culinary inspired beers, such as our popular Bakers Man Brand Stout series. I fully embraced the haze and dove deep into that style, which I believe has led to us making some truly exceptional versions. Our 2nd Anniversary Hazy Double IPA “Gimme a 2nd” garnered several reviews comparing it to that of a Monkish release, which was incredibly gratifying considering that Monkish is touted as one of the best brewers of the style. I remembered that I really enjoy the experimentation and tinkering side of brewing, which connects directly to my history as a homebrewer.

**What’s in the works for this year?**

We’ll continue down the path we have been paving: more collaborations, more tinkering, more learning and having fun with our beer. You’ll see more barrel aged beer releases in bottles and more releases for some of our non-barrel aged beers in cans. Some of our existing beers, such as Hop-Fu!, should level up in quality as we’ll start brewing with hops that I personally selected in Yakima, Washington. We plan to continue expanding within our existing space by adding some more fermentation capacity and growing our beer production team as needed. I think it is going to be an amazing year for North Park Beer Co. ‡
Michael Cardoza is a full-fledged bon vivant… and a bit of a Don Juan. He knows the way to the hearts of members of San Diego’s brewing community is through their stomachs. A fan of local beer since the early ’90s, he goes out of his way to keep local brewery staffers—from brewers to front-of-house—feeling equal parts full and appreciated courtesy of homemade, confection-stocked care packages.

“Beer industry folks never have time to eat, so I like to give them something quick and easy they can have a bite of now and finish later,” says Cardoza, speaking of a small-but-mighty variety of cookies he’s become known for among San Diego brewers in recent years.

Cardoza’s love of San Diego beer began when he was a college student working downtown. Strapped for cash, he was happy to stumble on Hang Ten Brewing, where there was cheap food and pitchers of beer far more exotic than standard kegger fare. Pitchers of house brews gave way to bombers of Pete’s Wicked Ale and Arrogant Bastard Ale on ski excursions, followed by Costco-procured cases of Karl Strauss’ Red Trolley Ale. But it wasn’t until he and his wife Rebecca began venturing to the places from which their beer hailed that his “homegrown obsession” took its ultimate shape.

“The first people I met in the brewing industry were at Green Flash’s original location in Vista,” he says. “It’s the people. The beer is the body, mind and soul of the people who are making it. It’s a community.”

Cardoza has become known throughout that community as a regular patron of numerous interests. His most frequented haunts include Burning Beard Brewing, Benchmark Brewing, North Park Beer Co., Amplified Ale Works and, most recently, Eppig Brewing. Cardoza says 99.9% of the reason he returns to all of them is the atmosphere and the people. And when the latter see him coming, it’s not odd for them to salivate a bit. Enter, the cookie man.

One day, Cardoza heard a bartender-slash-friend at Toronado San Diego was having “the shittiest of shittiest days,” so he went home and baked a batch of chocolate chip cookies that he later delivered to her at the bar. She said that act of kindness turned her entire day and mood around. It was a watershed moment for Cardoza, who now makes impromptu cookie deliveries to his favorite watering holes on a regular basis.

“Chocolate chip cookies are a little sweet for my taste, so I decided to add another ingredient and experimented with dried fruits. I started with raisins and cranberries before discovering sour cherries were the best,” he says. “I like to add alcohol to everything I do, so I started soaking the cherries in spirits. When I tried them with bourbon, it changed everything.”

So, too, did a conversation with Burning Beard head brewer Jeff Wiederkehr, who suggested he incorporate oats. His rationale was that, much like with spices such as cinnamon and nutmeg, brewers incorporate oats into some of their beers, which would make for a good beer-and-cookie pairing; a real “brewer’s cookie.” The result is a toothier confection with similar flavor, increased spice, and more to offer from a texture perspective.

And Cardoza’s no one-trick pony. He also won a chili cook-off at Burning Beard with a game-meat version of a football-season chili recipe he and his dad have perfected over the years, winning the first publicly-sold sixtel from the El Cajon brewery in the process. In celebration of Cardoza’s West Coaster ink, “The Beard” will hold a cookie-and-beer tasting with him on February 15. Additional tastings at North Park Beer Co. and Benchmark Brewing are TBD.

Can’t wait that long to try those cookies? No problem. Being the generous soul he is, Cardoza is sharing recipes for two varieties with readers. Consider it a Valentine for the San Diego beer community.
Bourbon-soaked Cherry & Dark Chocolate Oatmeal Cookies

Paired with Benchmark Brewing's Oatmeal Stout

YIELD: ABOUT 6 DOZEN 2-INCH COOKIES

½ cup dried tart cherries
½ cup bourbon whiskey
1 cup unsalted butter, softened
¾ cup granulated sugar
¾ cup light brown sugar, packed
1 egg
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp cinnamon
¼ tsp nutmeg
½ tsp salt
3 cups raw oats
12 ounces bittersweet chocolate chips (preferably Ghirardelli)
1 cup walnuts or pecans, chopped (optional)

Place the cherries in a small, non-reactive container. Cover with bourbon and soak for 20 minutes. Drain the cherries and set aside.

Preheat oven to 375° F.

Place the butter and sugars in a large mixing bowl or electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment and mix at medium speed until the mixture is creamy and light yellow in color, about 4 minutes. Add the egg and vanilla, and mix until fully incorporated. In a separate bowl, combine the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. Mix in the dry ingredients. Stir in the oats.

Fold in the chocolate chips, nuts and cherries. Drop the dough, 1 rounded tablespoon at a time, onto ungreased cookie sheets. Place in the oven and bake 8 to 9 minutes for a chewy cookie, or 10 to 11 minutes for a crispy cookie. Remove from the oven and let cool for 1 minute before transferring to a wire rack to cool to room temperature. Serve or store in an airtight container for transporting to your favorite brewery.
Bourbon-Soaked Cherry & Chocolate Chip Cookies

Paired with North Park Beer Co.’s Golden Phoenix Golden Milk Stout

YIELD: ABOUT 6 DOZEN 2-INCH COOKIES

½ cup dried tart cherries
½ cup bourbon whiskey
1 cup unsalted butter, softened (or margarine, to substitute)
¾ cup granulated sugar
¾ cup light brown sugar, packed
2 large eggs
2 tsp vanilla extract
2¼ cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp baking soda
½ tsp salt
1 ½ oz. bittersweet chocolate chips
1 cup walnuts or pecans, chopped (optional)

Place the cherries in a small, non-reactive container. Cover with bourbon and soak for 20 minutes. Drain the cherries and set aside.

Preheat oven to 375º F.

Place the butter and sugars in a large mixing bowl or electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment and mix at medium speed until the mixture is creamy and light yellow in color, about 4 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, and mix until fully incorporated. Mix in the vanilla. In a separate bowl, combine the flour, baking soda and salt. Mix in the dry ingredients in 3 batches. Stir in the chocolate chips, nuts and cherries. Drop the dough, 1 rounded tablespoon at a time, onto ungreased cookie sheets. Place in the oven and bake for 9 to 11 minutes, or until golden-brown. Remove from the oven and let cool for 1 minute before transferring to a wire rack to cool to room temperature. Serve or store in an airtight container for transporting to your favorite brewery.

* NOTE: The semisweet chocolate chips can be replaced with any variety of chip you prefer (e.g., milk chocolate, bittersweet chocolate, etc.)

—Recipes and pairings courtesy Michael Cardoza
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