



Beer flows freely from the tap at Discretion Brewing.

{taste}

Suds City

Riding a wave of Santa Cruz beers

By Stacey Vreeken

Looking for a craft beer with character? Maybe you want one that surprises with unique flavor, or perhaps you prefer a traditional quaff that shows the master's skill at brewing. Pubs in our coastal villages have got it covered, and with several new establishments upping the game, Santa Cruz is well on the way to becoming a destination for inspired, inventive craft beer.

"There's been a beer renaissance in this country that started in the late 1980s and has really come into full fruition in the last couple of years," says Stephen Wyman, owner of Boulder Creek Brewing. "Young people who have come up with microbrews and handcrafted beers as an option have a better appreciation and acquired taste for them. As an owner, I am amazed as to the level handcrafted beer has gone to."

A small cadre of breweries representing a variety of styles are creating a new synergy led by six regional pubs: Boulder Creek Brewing, Seabright Brewery, Santa Cruz Ale Works, Discretion Brewing, Sante Adairius Rustic Ales, and Santa Cruz Mountain Brewing.

"On weekends, we get a lot of guests from out of town hitting up all the spots, getting a unique brew tour in our county," says Jeff Greer of Santa Cruz Ale Works. "We send them off to Discretion, Seabright, Sante Adairis; we get referrals, too."

"Young people are driving this craft beer trend. We also find we're getting self-called 'beer geeks' from San Francisco, Oakland, and L.A. who are making a special trip to try our beer," says Adair Paterno of Sante Adairius.

"Beer tourism is back, and it's cool," says Charlie Meehan of Seabright Brewery.

Discretion Brewing

Discretion Brewing is owned by Rob and Kathleen Genco and includes family involvement with son, daughter and in-laws all pitching in. Master brewer is Scotts Valley native Michael Demers.

"We've been talking for years about opening some sort of family business... it's been a dream of ours," says Kathleen Genco. "It's fun to be working with my kids. We all bring different things to the mix, and it's all been complementary."

"We try to create a spot where people can just come and hang out in a casual and safe environment, a community-centered place," says Dustin Vereker, Rob and Kathleen's son-in-law and "beer ambassador." As a commitment to community, the pub has begun donating 20 percent of beer profits on Mondays to local nonprofits.

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Formica and wooden tables, benches, a child's play area are all jumble together in a huge red barn of a place that still looks clean and simple.

A wide range of beers: strong ales, brown ales, IPA, pilsner and a rye IPA are served, with the difficult to brew pilsner and the rye IPA as the flagship beers. Seasonal beers, lagers, pale ales and saison beers are also included, with samplers carried in old-fashioned muffin tins.

"We strive for a certain elegance in our beers rather than over-the-topness," says Kathleen. "Everything that (Demers) makes has a certain balance to it, a subtlety to it," like the name of brewpub.

A limited menu, including penne, sausage, chili and battered fish, is provided by Main Street Garden Café to round out the pub experience.

Sante Adairius Rustic Ales

Drive to the end of Kennedy Drive, a frontage road to Highway 1 in Capitola, to find Sante Adairius Rustic Ales, where you'll discover plenty of young people, some on bikes, a few with their dogs. The small pub has a casual, neighborhood feel, but the beer tends towards the daring and experimental.

Belgian-style ales enchant owners Adair Paterno and Tim Clifford, who push flavor boundaries with alternative yeasts and barrel-aged brews.

Known as adjuncts, these beers come with additional flavors, such as fruit, unusual grains and spices. At Sante Adairius, you'll find farmhouse ales, ales brewed with apricot or boysenberry, rye beers, as well as more

For a small charge, Boulder Creek Brewing offers a sampler of their finest beers.

traditional IPAs, wheat, saison, and porter styles.

"A lot of the beers we do are based in the Belgian tradition, which is a much more whimsical approach to making beer," says Paterno.

"We do fermentation with alternative yeast and bacteria, although we do play around with fruit as well, though it tends not to be main focus," she says. Alternative yeast and bacteria "creates a complexity we really enjoy."

Paterno and Clifford started as avid home brewers in the 1990s, always looking for new craft beers to try. Even though Clifford managed a home brew supply company in the bay area, "he started doing home brewing really, really excessively," says Paterno.

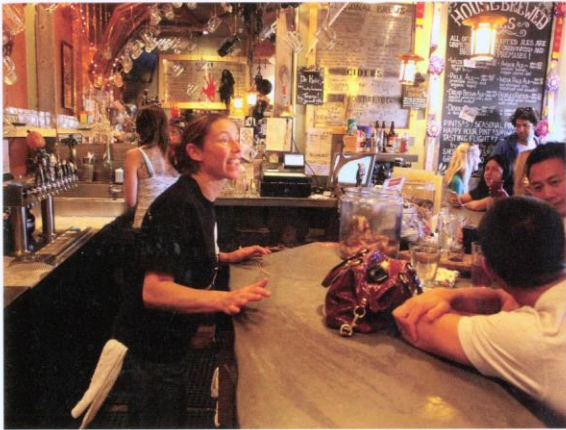
"With him brewing excessively and both of us being connoisseurs, it framed what the brewery would look like," she says.

"With barrel (aging), we're finding yeast living in the wood is doing amazing things to the beer. We are finding we have a house flavor that's developed over time. It's a rustic saison-y tart flavor that run through all of our ales, except of course our IPAs," says Paterno.

Open Thursday through Sunday, four to six ales are served, in half six-ounce pours or full 12 ounce. If you like adjunct, or flavored, beers, this is your spot.

Santa Cruz Ale Works

After six years brewing beer for whole-



sale, the time was right for brewer Marc Rosenblum to team with Jeff Greer and open Santa Cruz Ale Works tasting room and deli on Dubois Street in the Harvey West Park area.

"It was time to strike," says Greer. "Marc anticipated getting the taproom up and running, and the timing was right."

"We cannot sell pints without food, and I did not want to be another fried food place," says Rosenblum of Greer's inventive soup, salad, and sandwich menu.

The classy look of the pub – high, blond bar and a smattering of tables – is perfect for workers just getting off or shoppers needing relief from Costco. A range of brews, including oatmeal stout, a seasonal specialty and the flagship Hefeweizen and IPA, is offered on tap.

"We've been fortunate during the week," says Greer of the immediate popularity of the taproom from customers seeking alternative food and drink at Harvey West. "Happy hour is solid, too. They'd rather enjoy a craft beer than traffic at 5 o'clock."

Brewer Rosenblum grew up in Mountain View but was classically trained in Northern England. His laid-back nature belies his care in brewing, where he takes a deliberate approach to maintain consistency. Once the flavors in a recipe are just right in a particular brew, he'll work to reproduce it faithfully.

"You have to get the body, mouth feel, alcohol (right), but be ready to change when necessary according to the raw material. Every year is different, every crop is different," he says.

While Rosenblum was taught to make malt-style beers in the chilly climes of Britain, he loves the hoppy, aggressive West Coast style and works to blend the two together.

A busy weekend at Santa Cruz Mountain Brewery keeps their barkeep smiling.

"Making IPA is an experiment," says the man who after spending the day working at a big-name brewer, would go home and make more beer. "After making several hundred, you learn what you like, but it's always a learning experience."

Santa Cruz Mountain Brewing

Santa Cruz Mountain Brewing is all things Santa Cruz – small, neighborly and organic. The pub is located in the popular Swift Street Complex on the West Side, surrounded by wineries. Still, plenty of local beer lovers have no trouble finding the spot, open daily.

In this rustic and friendly setting, co-owners Emily Thomas and Chad Brill write their brew selection on a chalkboard, along with the occasional elaborate drawing. Food is available from the nearby Kelly's French Bakery.

Thomas is the main brewer, learning her craft in the pub town of Portland, Ore., from her uncles. Her commitment to hand-crafted, organic and sustainable brews is displayed in her selection of brown, amber, and pale ales, as well as porter, IPAs, stout and wheat beers.

"My philosophy is every neighborhood should and can sustain a brewery. It's great for neighborhoods," says Thomas. Santa Cruz Mountain Brewing is "a community hub, a casual space with dogs, kids, bikes."

A seven-barrel brewing system keeps the selection changing frequently. Servers, who are brewers themselves and make suggestions, will encourage you to be open-



Brewmaster Matt Becchioni mashes the ingredients for the Seabright Brewery's oatmeal stout.

minded and try new things.

"One thing that makes our beer unique is we have an older system that takes a lot of labor. We're hands on in there, bottle capping and labeling everything," says Thomas, pointing out that the availability of organic ingredients determines much of what they brew.

"We're all really excited to try new stuff and encourage everyone to come up with new ideas," says Thomas. "If someone feels like making a chili vanilla beer, we encourage that as well."

Boulder Creek Brewing

The grand dames of the beer scene are Seabright Brewery and Boulder Creek Brewing, with full menus and sophisticated brews.

Boulder Creek Brewing, which has a rustic setting deep in the woods up Highway 9, also has a new sister in the Surfrider Cafe, 429 Front St. in downtown Santa Cruz, where, including Boulder Creek brews, 16 local beers are served on draft.

Co-owners Nancy Long and Stephen Wyman founded the brewery in the redwoods in 1989, and it has become a mainstay in the small mountain town.

The Dragon's Breath IPA is the biggest seller, the Redwood Amber is the house beer, and Mountain Gold is an American-style blond ale.

"We always keep some kind of pale ale on tap, some dark beer, and are always rotating new one-off beers in and out," says brewer Joe Yuhas, who likes smoky characteristics, sour or

unusual beers, experimenting with spices, fruit and barrel aging.

"Brewers are good people in a small tight-knit community. It's a good thing to see new breweries open. The beer scene is getting better and better," he says.

Seabright Brewery

Seabright Brewery has seen many changes in its 25 years, from unsophisticated drinkers who just wanted a cold one to patrons who can detect a speck of soap residue on a glass.

"You've got to get it right. People really know their beer now," says Charlie Meehan, who co-owns the brewpub with Keith Cranmer.

The brewery occupies a high visibility corner at the end of Seabright Avenue, marked by the large pipe water feature on the outdoor patio. Bands perform regularly, and pub is a well-known gathering spot. The extensive menu complements a traditional offering of pale ale, amber, IPA, oatmeal stout, and a cider.

"The IPA is huge now," says Meehan.

Over the years, Seabright has mentored its share of brewers, including Rosenblum.

"I have a lot of brewers get hired away. That's the way it works," says Meehan. "We're all friends... I can call any pub and ask questions and vice versa."

Meehan describes it more as camaraderie than competition.

"It happened really fast. It seemed like overnight, there were a bunch of breweries," he says. "There're enough people to go around. It always works out. The more breweries there are, the more people get into it." ■



Ingo Duarte passes through the gleaming fermentation room at the Discretion Brewery.