

DRINK LOCAL

When you explore a new region, part of the fun includes tasting the flavors that have developed over time and through the mix of cultures that have inhabited the area. Though some prefer their oranges and datil peppers tossed in a salad or cooked in a stew, St. Augustine's craft brewers have found a way to showcase our regional flavors in a whole new way.

By Laura Hampton



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In 1994, there were 537 craft breweries in the United States, according to the Brewers Association website. In 2013, there were more than 2,800 nationwide.

Clearly, craft brewing is experiencing a revolution, and St. Johns County residents are benefiting. As of October 2017, there are four independent brewers in St. Augustine — each with its own unique flavor and style.

Ancient City Brewing

Locations: 3420 Agricultural Center Drive and 18 Cathedral Place

Info: ancientcitybrewing.com

A born and bred native, owner Greg Tuttle's love of St. Augustine is evident from the name of his brewery to the name of his brews.

Offerings like Matanzas River Red Ale and Castillo Coconut Porter scream locally brewed beer with the flavors Floridans are proud to share with the world.

"You have these 7 ½ million people come through here a year, and they want to taste St. Augustine," Tuttle says. "They want to eat St. Augustine; they want to live it. I think we fit right into that."

To offer visitors that one-of-a-kind St. Augustine flavor, Ancient City Brewing opened a second tap room downtown in July.

So far, Manager Phoebe Taylor says it hasn't been a tough sell.

"Augustine's Orange Amber Ale is our No. 1 seller downtown," Taylor says. "Because it's warm outside, and they (tourists) want something that represents Florida and St. Augustine, it's an easy sell to someone that's hot and wandering around downtown."

After 27 months in business, Ancient City Brewing is not only surviving, but growing. In addition to opening a second location, the brewery's beers are



now in Gainesville, Jacksonville and Daytona Beach.

Though the brewery is already known for having a great selection of flavorful beers, Tuttle recently hired a new brewer to "take it to the next level."

After a nationwide search, Tuttle found Tate Warren, a former school teacher and master brewer from Erie, Pennsylvania.

After two months of evaluation, Warren says everything's going well right now.

"The hardest thing's trying to keep up," Warren says. "We're moving some beer."

At its State Road 16 location, the brewery usually has 20 beers on tap; in the downtown location, there are 10.

Though the offerings include seasonal and special-release brews, the brewery's six flagship beers represent the unique history and culture in St. Johns Coun-

ty. In addition, the flagships cover a broad range of craft brewing styles: Galleon's Golden Ale, Matanzas River Red Ale, Ponce's Pale Ale, Augustine's Orange Amber, Anastasia Island IPA and Castillo Coconut Porter.

Daily, the beer offerings in both locations are listed on a chalk board along with the alcohol by volume (ABV) and international bitterness units (IBU).

Generally, the higher the ABV percentage, the more intoxicated you will get when drinking it.

The IBUs measure the bitterness from the hops on a scale of 0 to 100, but Warren warns it's not always that simple.

"There's perceived bitterness, and then there's measured bitterness," Warren says.

Additives like honey and fruits can cut down the bitterness, as can the type of hops that is used.

"The West Coast hops are characterized as piney, grapefruit rind-like and almost catty," Warren says. "Compared to a fruity hop like Ekuanot, which will have a lemon grass, peppery flavor."

But the most important variable is the consumer's preferences and personal taste buds.

"Everybody's different," Warren says.

Flight suggestion: *Augustine's Orange Amber, Matanzas River Red Ale, Anastasia Island IPA, Castillo Coconut Porter*



Above: A copper-coated stainless steel tank at Bog Brewery adds rustic charm to the brewery's industrial urban chic tap room.

Left: Manager of Ancient City Brewing's downtown location Phoebe Taylor pours a Castillo Coconut Porter.



Our locally owned craft breweries offer flights of beer, which gives you the opportunity to taste several of the breweries offerings before committing to a full 12 or 16 ounce beer. Flights run from \$5 to \$10 and include four to six varieties.

The Bog Brewery & Taproom

Location: 218 West King St.

Info: bogbrewery.com

Brothers John France and Steve Mendoza fell in love with beer first. Their second love was the building at 218 West King St.

Built in the early 1900s, the brewery and tap room has an open industrial feel with wooden tables and chairs and enviable exposed brick walls.

“It’s a nice building with some character,” Mendoza says. “We just really liked it.”

Mendoza started brewing beer in college at the age of 19 because “you don’t need to be 21 to buy yeast, hops and water.”

But he got serious about it when he worked for a leading craft beer bar and restaurant in Washington, D.C.

“I got exposed to all these craft beers and kind of fell in love with it. There’s so many different flavors, and I enjoy people’s interpretations of the styles and the history of the styles.”

When the brothers opened the brewery in March 2016, A1A Ale Works was still brewing their own beer and Ancient City Brewing Company had been open for a year.

But they knew there was room for more craft beers.

“If you get a burger at two different restaurants, they taste different,” Mendoza says. “Everyone has an IPA, and everyone has a different opinion of what an IPA should taste like, so it’s fun to enjoy that.”

The Bog Brewery brews both traditional and non-traditional beers.

“We do a lot of Belgian-inspired ales that are very authentic and traditional, and then we do a lot more fun stuff like a mango saison or the smoked datil cream, where we smoke the datils ourselves and add it to our cream ale for a light, flavorful smoky beer.”

There are usually 10 beers on tap at The Bog, and the bartenders are always happy to help patrons with their selections.

If you’re new to craft beers, Mendoza offers this bit of advice, “Don’t be shy.”

“Just because you don’t like Guinness doesn’t mean you don’t like dark beers; and just because you don’t like strong beers doesn’t mean you won’t like a saison,” he says. “You’ve really got to approach it with an open mind.”

Flight suggestion: *Belgian Double, IPA, Smoked Datil Cream and Citra Pale Ale*

Old Coast Ales

Location: 300 Anastasia Blvd.

Info: oldcoastales.com

What do you do when everybody compliments your home-brewed beer? You open a brewery.

At least that’s what owners Jon Boisclair and Matt Hooker did.

“We have a lot of friends who are home brewers, so we’d get together and taste our beers,” Hooker says. “Consistently, the feedback we got on ours was, ‘Wow! That’s really good.’”

Though the brewers decided to open their own brewery and tap room five years ago, as with any venture, the process from conception to reality takes time.

In preparation, the duo visited breweries throughout the U.S., read books on starting a brewery and wrote a business plan.

“Our first business plan was written four years ago,” Hooker says. “It’s been three and a half years from that to opening.”

Although Old Coast Ales is old news to the owners, it’s opening in February 2017 was new and exciting for the craft brew scene in St. Augustine, which Hooker says is very friendly.

“The industry is amazing,” he says. “It’s so collaborative. To get open is a big process, and everybody has gone through the same thing. That gives you a little bit of that spirit of working together.”

Though there’s a lot of camaraderie among craft

Beer taster’s glossary

Alcohol by Volume (ABV)

A measurement of the ethyl alcohol or ethanol content of a solution in terms of the percentage volume of alcohol per volume of beer. The average alcohol content of craft beer is 5.9 percent.

Adjunct

Any unmalted grain or other fermentable ingredient used in the brewing process. Adjuncts used are typically either rice or corn, and can also include honey, syrups and numerous other sources of fermentable carbohydrates. They are common in mass produced light American lager-style beers.

Botanicals

A substance obtained from a plant and used as an additive in beer. Popular botanicals include herbs, flowers, citrus, tea and coffee.

International Bitterness Unit (IBU)

The measure of the bittering substances in beer (analytically assessed as milligrams of isomerized alpha acid per liter of beer, in ppm). Light lagers typically have an IBU rating between 5-10 while big, bitter India Pale Ales can often have an IBU rating between 50 and 70.

Flight

A number of small beer glasses, each holding a different beer. These small samples allow you to try multiple styles of beer in one sitting and in moderate quantities. Beer flights are usually 4 to 6 samples.

brewers, each has a different take on beer.

“It’s a combination of cooking and chemistry,” Hooker says. “You’ve got the same basic ingredients, and you can create this wonderful liquid. But it’s different with each brewery even if you’re brewing the same beer.”

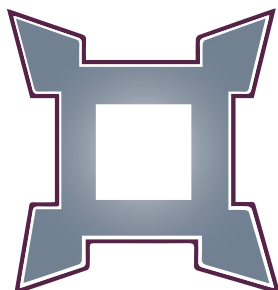
Boisclair and Hooker take a traditional approach to their flagship beers, all of which were brewed by the homebrewers well before they considered opening a tap room.

“The bottom line is you’ve got to have a good solid base,” Hooker says. “If we’re doing an IPA, we want it be the very best IPA that it can be.”

Like a father would have difficulty choosing one of his children, Hooker hesitates to make recommendations to his customers. Instead, he wants to know what kind of beer you like.

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“Some don’t like hops; some love hops,” he says. “We want you to have a good experience, so I’m going to find a beer that you love.”

Burt’s Summer Ale is the brewery’s best seller because it has wide appeal. It’s light, refreshing and crisp, with a hint of fruitiness. No. 2 is the Empirical IPA.

“It’s just a solid, solid beer,” Hooker says.

Other favorites include the No Apostrophe Red Ale, Boulevard Brown and Ol’ Horner ESB.

Boisclair and Hooker try to keep eight to 10 beers on tap, and though you can find traditional style beers here, the brewers still have room to experiment.

One popular beer with a twist is the Tug Boat Smoke.

“It has some Cherrywood smoked malt in it,” Hooker says. “Have that with some roasted meats at a barbecue; it would be perfect.”

Flight suggestion: *Signal Pale Ale, Empirical IPA, No Apostrophe Red, Boulevard Brown*

Dog Rose Brewing Co.

Location: 77 Bridge St.

Info: dogrosebrewing.com

Though Dog Rose Brewing Co. is new to the craft brew scene in St. Augustine, owner and brewer Doug Murr is not.

Formerly, the master brewer at A1A Ale Works, Murr has a passion for making beer and the Lincolnville neighborhood, where his latest venture is set to open in October 2017.

“Our focus is this neighborhood,” Murr says. “If they want live music. Guess what? We’ll have live music. It’s their place, and we’re excited to be a part of that.”

As an industry insider, Murr has watched the craft brew industry grow over the years.

“There was a big spurt of craft breweries in the 1990s,” Murr says. “A lot of them fell down, and that was it.”

But what’s happening now is different; it has traction.

“It’s been a grass roots movement. It’s been a slow grow,” Murr says. “What that means is we have a very, very, very highly educated consumer base. They know beer.”

At a very basic level, most beer falls into one of two categories: lager or ale.

But that’s at a very basic level. From there, brewers add different grains, botanicals, fruits and other ingredients to create any number of variations of pale ales, brown ales, porters, stouts, wheat beers, pilsners, dunkels, saisons ... and the list goes on.

“I’ve always enjoyed playing with different ingredients — different botanicals, different adjuncts — and those adjuncts have changed over the years,” Murr



Home brewers Matt Hooker and Jon Boisclair turned their passion for making beer into a business. The duo opened Old Coast Ales in February to showcase what friends said was “really good” beer.

says. “I did a toasted oat pale ale seven years ago, and people were amazed. ‘How did you come up with that?’ they would ask. Now, that’s so mundane.”

Though Murr’s vision for the Dog Rose Brewery certainly includes some level of experimentation, he likes the idea of getting back to basics.

“I go to breweries sometimes, and it’s like, can I just get an IPA?” Murr says. “I like the idea of brewing some really straightforward, solid, world-class beers.”

In addition to putting a lot of thought into his beer offerings, Murr labored over the details in his very open, very chic tap room.

From the ambrosia maple woodwork on the bar to the art in the men’s bathroom (he let his wife decorate the women’s), each decision was made with a clear end result in mind — a comfortable, upscale bar that you could stop into “dressed to nines” on the way to dinner or a show.

“When you come in here, it’s a lot like coming into my living room or coming over to my house for drinks,” Murr says. “We want you to know who we are just by being here.”



Craft brewer Doug Murr proudly displays his Lincolnville flag, which will hang in his new brewery, Dog Rose Brewing Co., scheduled to open October 2017.