

A Tale of Two Festivals

The Christmas Craft Beer Show was held the first weekend in December at Victoria's Memorial Arena. This was held on the hockey ice area, (i.e. beer on ice!). Although popular it sounded a bit like a hockey game with beer especially when one was near the band at one end. The volume made it next to impossible to discuss beers or indeed anything at all. (The standout beer was a cask of Ol' Iron Tooth Absinthe Stout. This was a blend of Stoutnik Russian Imperial Stout from Nanaimo's Longwood Brewery, together with Baba Yaga Absinthe from neighbouring Arbutus Distillery. These were cask conditioned with fennel, lemon, mint and Anise Physsos. As Harley Smith, Longwood's head brewer, put it, "the result is huge beer coming in at a "delicate" 13 percent ABV!"

In contrast the Fifth Annual Winterbrau which was held at Canoe Brewpub in Victoria in December was a beer lover's delight. Sure there was a band playing, but it was Bučan Bučan, a local high energy folk-rock Balkan brass marching band. Eighteen breweries brought winter ales and the crowd loved them. Favourites included Steel & Oak's Beechwood Smoked Honey Doppelbock (7.9 ABV), Moon Under Water's Blackberry Copper Kettle Sour, and Category 12's Wild IPA, fermented with *Saccharomyces "brux"* yeast, which gives an interesting tropical fruit aroma. Axe and Barrel's new brewer, Andrew Tessier, has a very smooth traditional Irish Stout, and Bridge Brewing were pouring a port barrel aged Belgian Red IPA. Spinnakers had a cask of Sour Plum Fairy, the 2015 Biere de Noel aged in red wine barrels with backyard plums, that was rich and delicious.

Spinnakers Opens 9 Days After Fire

Paul Hadfield is a man who doesn't take "No" for an answer. When Victoria's Spinnakers Brewpub caught fire on Wednesday, November 23rd, the insurance company told him that there was no way that they could do an evaluation, settle the claim and payout, for at least three months. Paul, who was vacationing with his wife, Mary, in Hawaii at the time, hustled back to Victoria, mustered the troops, and said, "We're going to open in nine days". And they did!

The fire, which originated in the upstairs fireplace, was the result of the failure of its firebrick base, which caused the floor to catch fire. The heroes of the day are General Manager, Claire Radosevic, and Chef Ali Ryan. Claire sent a maintenance worker went up to the roof to check the fire, and in the meantime she and Ali quickly evacuated the staff and patrons from the building, preventing anyone from coming to any harm. Prompt action by the Victoria Fire Department prevented the fire from causing major damage to the building. From the outside it looked worse than it really was. Certainly there were flames coming from the roof next to the chimney, but these were quickly extinguished. It looked really bad, according to Paul Hadfield, because smoke spread under the upstairs floorboards, up the insides of the exterior walls and poured out of the soffits. However, other than the fireplace area, most of the damage was from smoke and water.

An announcement was sent out immediately to all 93 members of staff that everybody was still employed, and that they would still get paid. On the following Monday at the Spinnakers Christmas party, Paul Hadfield confirmed that none of the staff would be laid off. He appealed to everyone be creative in finding special talents that might help the team get on the fast track to reopening. About two dozen were dispatched to local liquor stores to give away samples of Spinnakers beers to the public. Paul rented a nearby warehouse and set a group to work on refinishing damaged furniture. He hired contractors to work around the clock to get the work completed before his deadline. He publicised that at 4 p.m. on December 2nd the pub would be back in business, and many faithful patrons (including yours truly) were there to see it happen. What we also saw was a very tired group of staff who had worked through the night.

Paul showed me around on re-opening day and one thing that struck me was that not one window was broken. The fireplaces had been removed and Paul's rebuilding plans were already underway. He pointed out that it was an opportunity to make some much needed improvements. Exactly four weeks after [the fire](#), the kitchen and dining room reopened with a fresh new look. And the food was up to the usual standards. At dinner recently Chef Ali Ryan had surpassed herself with a magnificent Tourtière with lovely flaky pastry. She explained that it was her mother's recipe! Ali was delighted to be back in the kitchen working with her close-knit group of staff again, "her family". Others who are glad to see Spinnakers back are the local farmers who supply Spinnakers kitchens.

The "Black Wednesday fire" is now shrugged off as just another in the storied history of Spinnakers. Paul Hadfield started in the 1980's by lobbying to open what would become

Canada's first in-house brewpub. He had to get federal regulations changed to allow beer to be brewed and served in the same premises. Since then he has had multiple run-ins with both provincial and federal regulators. And, it's his determination to get things done when needed that has Spinnakers back in business again so quickly. We should all raise a glass to Paul Hadfield!

Tod Creek Craft Cider should never have happened. Chris Schmidt bought an old rundown dairy farm to house his construction company. The eight acres of land was zoned as Agricultural Land Reserve, and under the ALR rules non-agricultural uses of the land are only permitted as long as there are farming or ranching activities also. So Chris, who has a wicked sense of humour, told me that he considered everything from berries to pot, but settled on an orchard and cidery because he really likes cider. The catch was that he knew nothing about growing cider apples or making cider

Five years ago Chris began by taking a cider making course at the Washington State University, doing a lot of reading, and a great deal of experimentation. Nat West, owner of Portland's Reverend Nat's Hard Cider, was a great help in those early years. The first stage involved renovating the 9000 square foot dairy barn. Next was planting 3300 cider apple trees on three acres. These trees are all traditional West of England varieties on M9 dwarf tree rootstock: Dabinett, Kingston Black and Yarlinton Mill, with Bulmers Norman and Michelin (Somerset varieties of French origin). The cidery has been open for a year, and the 2016 cider was made with some juice from the farm, with the addition of some from apples growing on two acres that Chris leased near Kelowna. Chris is not interested in making organic cider but all the apples are carefully selected to make a premium juice. He explained, with twinkle in his eye, that his ciders are made with "free range ethically sourced MSG" at which point I stopped making notes!!

The ciders are excellent. We started by tasting Bamfield Bound, made with two thirds dessert apples and one third cider varieties (Dabinett and Tremlett) with a dash of maple syrup to take the dry edge off. Next was the excellent Malahop which is Bamfield Bound with the addition of Centennial, Stirling and Chinook hops. We took home a couple of the ciders. Prospect Dry is a delicious cider, with a very traditional flavour. 6 percent ABV. It is made with all Vancouver Island Granny Smiths lightly aged in Hungarian Oak barrels. This is a dry cider that went well with meat dishes, especially local lamb, as it cut through the fattiness of the meat. I really liked Totenköpfe ("Death's Head") Badass Cider, a 9 percent ABV blend of iced, wild fermented and bittersweet Ciders, and maple syrup. This was a medium dry cider with quite high acidity.

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