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TREETOP TASTES: Fruit Beer Calicraft Brewing Co., Walnut Creek

BREWMASTER BIOS: BLAINE LANDBERG, OWNER/HEAD BREWER; AND THOMAS VO, BREWMASTER

Raised in a family of craft-beer enthusiasts, Blaine Landberg grew up sneaking sips of the good stuff and pursued his passion while attending UC Berkeley, distributing beer among his dorm-mates under the label Buzzerkeley. He later spent 13 years working for Honest Tea, where he learned the ins and outs of the beverage industry, before starting Calicraft Brewing Co. in 2012. Landberg eventually teamed up with fellow self-taught home brewer Thomas Vo, who helped create Calicraft's new products and open its Walnut Creek taproom in 2016.

BEER TREND: It's a ripe time for fruit beers—but don't mistake these brews as cloyingly sweet or artificial tasting. Landberg and Vo are reinventing the fruit-beer concept by blurring the line between beer and wine to intensify that bright, fresh fruit flavor.

WHY IT'S TRENDING: Brewers have been combining fruit and beer for decades, but fruit beer has skyrocketed in popularity recently, as creative brewmasters seek to entice drinkers with unique flavor experiences. "People are more open to trying different things now," explains Landberg, "[and] we as brewers are getting better at using fruit in beer. ... The response for us has been tremendous." Indeed, Calicraft's fruit beers frequently sell just as fast as—if not faster than—its IPAs.

TASTING NOTES: When crafting fruit beers, Landberg and Vo ask themselves: *What if a wine cooler was fruity but dry, complex, and actually drinkable?* To achieve that, Calicraft uses the lineup of grains from its hazy IPA to produce a dry mouthfeel; mixes in tons of fruit; and adds wine yeast and grapes to create the flavors, dryness, aromas, and textures of wine.

WHAT TO SIP: Passionfruit Trees. This refreshing tippie is crafted with oats, Sauvignon Blanc, white wine yeast, and loads of passion fruit—resulting in a dry, tart brew with a fragrant aroma that transports you to the tropics. It's fruity, flavorful, and only 6.5 percent ABV, making it an ideal summertime sipper. 2700 Mitchell Dr., Walnut Creek, (925) 478-8103, calicraft.com. —Alejandra Saragoza



Blaine Landberg and Thomas Vo in their Walnut Creek taproom.

