



Harpoon IPA, owned by Mass. Brewing Company, was created by three college friends who, after developing a taste for European beer in their post- graduation travels, decided to bring the unique brew method of the IPA back to the east coast.

Opening a brewery in the Seaport in 1986, where it still resides to this day, Harpoon has since grown to become one of the most recognizable names in craft brewing as it dared to introduce New England to the hoppy heavy taste unique to the IPA, a previously uncharted flavor territory for the area.

Having operated one location in the Seaport for 36 years, the company also purchased a second brewing and retail location in Windsor, VT in 2000. Mass. Bay Brewing Company and the Harpoon IPA brand have been amidst and bore witness to the vast expansion of the district in recent years.

According to Chief Marketing Officer, Jon London, this is not a bad thing. "Being in a sort of an atmosphere and environment that's full of 20- something- year olds and 30- something- year- olds is a real positive for us because it gives us so many more opportunities to interact with people, to introduce the brand and to share our story with people," he said. "Obviously with it comes more competition, other local breweries have opened up retail locations as well, but we welcome it."

Alongside the heavy foot traffic and healthy competition, the brewery has yet to experience hardship because of its seaside location, according to London. The past three years have been free of any 'storm or foul weather- related situations.

As far as production goes, even accommodating a recent acquisition with Vermont Brewery, Long Tail Brewing Company, Mass Bay remains in the green, "We're in a pretty good position from a production standpoint. We're keeping everyone busy, but we're not at a point where we are capacity constrained," London said.

The actual brewery location itself has grown quite a bit since its humble beginnings in the mid-80s.

Boasting a beer hall equipped with food, a beer garden, retail products, and brewery tours and tastings, the Harpoon IPA has become an empire of its own.

Despite the beer's immense success, Mass. Bay Brewing Co. has remained loyal to its roots. Still being run by one of the original co- founders, Dan Kenary, the company is also unique in its 'employee owned' ownership model. The transition, which occurred in 2014, involved allocating 48% of the company to its employees through an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP).

London noted the positive impact that the model has on the company culture as a whole, "I think it is a good thing. It forces him [Dan Kenary] to be extremely open with our whole employee base because again, they are all owners in the same endeavor and so you can't hide things. You've got to be more transparent than you would be under any other set of circumstances, so it forces you as management to act differently, but I think the employees really appreciate that," he said. "You take extra pride in the fact that you're an owner you want to offer up the best product possible and in drinkers' minds they see that as a differentiator for us versus other brands."

Mass. Bay Brewing Company proudly claims such differentiation as an independent craft brewer, "We look at ourselves as a leader within the Boston and New England community. And with that comes responsibility and for us, we have always tried to build as strong a connection as possible with the local and regional communities. That's in our DNA. That's who we are," London said.

From: <https://read.thebostonguardian.com/the-boston-guardian;see-2022/08/12;c-4007714>