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DRINKS

BEAU'S: A BREW WITH INTEGRITY



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It's been said many times before, but rarely does there come along a brewery as honest as Beau's. The father-and-son founding team scrapped their advertising budget from the get-

go in lieu of a dedication to great taste, sustainable production, and community activism, including hundreds of thousands of dollars in fundraising donated to deserving causes. Not to mention a steady pour of top accolades from the likes of the Golden Tap Awards, the Canadian Brewing Awards, the National Organic Beer Championship, and a gold from the prestigious French Mondiale De La Bière.

Steve Beauchesne, a former record label owner, Ontario government business planner and full-time beer geek, started seriously considering the idea over a few pints with his dad one night.

"We were talking about his former textiles business and how he might have to move it off shore, or, how he could scrap it and open that brewery we've always been talking about," says Beauchesne. "The next day, I sobered up, and it still felt like a good idea to sell the house and move my family back home to the farm, so we started looking into it. I was a beer enthusiast from long before I was legally allowed to be, and had dabbled in home-brewing before, but neither of us had ever done it professionally."

Luckily, starting a brewery is actually as tasty as it sounds. It was imperative for Steve and his friends to sample as much competition as possible. "We started by drinking pretty much anything we could get our hands on, and it was a lot of fun, I can tell you that," he says with a laugh.

Two years of hard work setting up the brewery finally paid off, when 'crisi-tunity' struck. A glitch in their cooling system froze 20 per cent of their first batch for market. "It started off pretty strong when we went to keg it, and it was monstrous by the end. We almost dumped it down the drain, but realized, 'My god, this beer

is delicious," Beauchesne recalls.

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The beer was promptly shipped off for judging at the Golden Tap awards, placing best in show, winning over coveted bar taps across the province. To offset their limited capacity and high demand, Beau's decided to make the award-winning batch, dubbed Lug Tread, their flagship light lager, and to offer a rotating assortment of one-off seasonal brews.

"We never wanted to be the brewery with the slick marketing campaign, coming off the hip downtown impression, only to reveal that we are really just a bunch of beer geeks in a farming town," Beauchesne explains. "We decided to focus on honesty and to celebrate rural Ontario life. That's what the tractor in Lug Tread beer symbolizes."

To complement their ethical image, Beau's packaging materials are made from 100 per cent post-consumer materials, printed on cotton-based card stock, and use 600ml bottles which translates to less labels, caps, and bottles, and, more beer.

"Those 12 oz/341ml bottles are just so standard, they really bug me," Beauchesne confesses, adding that as a former home-brewer, he has a friendly outlook on the micro-brewing community.

"We look at our competition the way most beer enthusiasts would: More beer is good, and more variety is good. If someone has a Church Key West Coast Pale Ale or a County Durham Hop Addict, that actually helps my business because that's someone being exposed to good beer. We exist because we have a love of beer, and we think our drinkers would think 'having one beer to drink for the rest of our lives would be hellish.'"

Beau's current seasonal brew is the Bog Water Gruit Ale; a dark and malty drink made from a 500-year-old Bavarian recipe, which substitutes myrtle for hops.

"People that get the name, get it, and people that don't probably wouldn't drink it anyway," says Beauchesne. "We don't care how bad you might think our choice of name was, I have no patience for conservative thinking."

Expect a citrusy and piney Beaver River I.P.Eh? to make appearances at LCBOs in the spring.

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