

# Brew pubs evolve into big business

## South Oakland a destination for beer enthusiasts

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Craft breweries began springing up in Michigan only about 15 years ago, yet today there are more than 70 in the state. Ten are located in the county with most in southeast Oakland.

At Royal Oak Brewery, there are six or seven beers on tap at any time. The outdoor deck and a large, open atmosphere have made it one of the more popular settings in a competitive bar/restaurant scene in recent years.

The Royal Oak Red is one of the favorites, having won a medal at the 2005 Great American Beer Festival in Denver. Brew master Tim Selewski said the average batch at his establishment lasts 10 to 14 days.

Birmingham's Big Rock Chophouse has received gold and bronze medals at the annual World Beer Championships.

Its brew master, Dan Rogers, has been brewing beer for 16 years after being a chef.

"I just like that it's still kind of like cooking in a way. You have to come up with different recipes," he said. "I just have to make something. I couldn't sit behind a desk."

Todd Parker, brewmaster of Copper Canyon Brewery in Southfield, said "When you walk through and talk to people at the bar who love your beer, it's an ego boost to say the least.

"I love the fact that I'm creating something that's unique and making a difference."

Scott Morton co-owned three restaurants, including a brewpub, before becoming owner and brewmaster of Lily's Seafood Grill and Brewery in Royal Oak. He prides himself on the quality of food that accompanies the beer at his brewpub and gets enthused talking about the chemistry and artistry that goes into creating beer.

"It's just like you're a chef," Morton said. "You like to see people enjoying your food. You see somebody looking at (the beer) and smelling it, and

bringing it to their lips and you just want to watch what their reaction is. It's like an artist looking at someone that appreciates their painting."

### Getting to this point

Beer enthusiasts began creating their own unique beers, or craft beers, when homebrewing was legalized by the federal government in 1978, said Paul Gatza, director of the Brewers Association, based in Boulder, Colo.

According to the Brewers Association Web site, beertown.org, marketing campaigns shaped people's beer preferences to light-adjunct lager by the 1970s. The beer styles brought to the U.S. from immigrants had begun to fade.

Homebrewing grew into a hobby because it had become the only way for people to experience beers of other countries and cultures, and those enthusiasts eventually started businesses offering craft beers to reintroduce people to more flavors and traditions of beer.

Gatza said Michigan has the fifth most breweries in the nation with 73. It's behind California, Washington, Colorado and Oregon.

In 2007, Michigan's craft beer production grew 22 percent from 2006, which is a much higher jump than the national average of 12 percent.

"Michigan has very educated consumers," Gatza said. "Michigan kind of got a head start on many of the other states, so the general population has a better sense of beer styles. There is a huge homebrewing community throughout Michigan."

Michigan's head start on other states was inspired by Bell's Brewery in Kalamazoo, which opened in 1983, he said. Gatza said most states didn't see breweries until the mid-'90s. Today, Bell's is not only a staple in West Michigan, its popular varieties are sold at stores all over the state.

As Michigan continues to see a rise in craft beer production, potentially moving from its present rank of 11th in the country, brewers at Oakland County breweries and brewpubs work to create fresh concoctions every month.

### How they do it

Brewpubs, which brew their own beer, but generally do not sell it off the premises, generally stock about four of the same house beers year-round.

The brewpubs also generally have a few taps that rotate seasonally or monthly.

Beer is made of four main ingredients -- water, malted barley, hops and

yeast. It is possible to make beer without hops though, as Parker of Copper Canyon did to create a Valentine's Day beer called Love Potion. While leaving out hops is less common, it's done in traditional Belgian beers.

Beer usually has a 4 to 5 percent alcoholic volume, but 6 or 7 percent are seen in the craft brewing industry, Parker said.

Some, such as "The Gift," a strong Belgian ale poured at Black Lotus Brewery in Clawson, have alcohol volumes in the double digits. Parker said Copper Canyon will be putting a beer on tap that will be 10 percent alcohol with 10 malts and 10 hops, called "Ten" for the brewpub's 10th anniversary.

Most beers don't reach or go above the 10 percent threshold because it becomes more expensive to make, Parker added. It takes longer to ferment, requires more yeast and needs more sugar.

To the main ingredients, brewers add different things to the mix such as orange peels, cherries, lemon grass, honey and other fruits and herbs to create something new.

Brewers usually start with a recipe and develop variations to it.

"Beer is virtually limitless. I could sit down and brew brown ales every day of my life and probably come up with a different brew every day," Morton said.

"As a brewer, you have an idea in your head of what you want that to be and you rarely ever produce that the first time," he said. "That's the cool thing about brewing: It's ever-changing. It's always exciting."

Mixing main ingredients in different variations and allowing the beer to ferment for different amounts of time determines what is to become ale or lager and what kind each will be.

Beer takes weeks to ferment. Ales take about two weeks and lagers take four to six.

Would you like beer with that?

When people think of pairing, wine and food most often comes to mind. Yet those in the beer brewing industry stand by their product as being just as good -- if not better -- for pairing.

"I think sometimes beer doesn't get the respect it deserves," Morton said. "Beer has as much character as wine does. Its history is probably richer, it just doesn't seem to get the kudos wine does."

Beertown.org explains principles for pairing food with beer and even offers a beer and food pairing chart.

The Brewers Association suggests matching strength of beer with strength of food, finding harmonies between scents of beer and food and considering the sweetness, bitterness, carbonation, spiciness and richness of the beer and food.

Beer-related classes are routinely held by publishers of the bi-monthly Michigan Beer Guide.

For those who aren't interested in being guided in beer drinking, Morton has advice to beer drinkers that is simple.

"You should drink what you enjoy. They all have appropriate times in which to be enjoyed whether it's the meal that you're enjoying or the time of day or the company you're with. I don't believe in stereotypes."

Whether beer enthusiasts drink styles depending on their food or not, it is undeniable that certain beers accompany seasons of the year the best.

Just like everything else that comes with summertime, as temperatures rise, beer gets lighter. Eric Briggeman, brew master president of the Michigan Brewers Guild and brew master at Rochester Mills Brewery, which is owned by the same company that operates Royal Oak Brewery and the Detroit Beer Co. in downtown Detroit's entertainment district, said wheat beers are most popular in the summer as they are lighter in body and flavor and have fruity or spicy flavors.

"They tend to be a little less heavy," Parker concurred. "You're sitting outside, it's lighter fares like people would eat. They don't want to be filled up."

Briggeman said Oktoberfest beers are popular for the fall. Higher alcohol beers such as Imperial Stout and Winter Warmers are popular in the wintertime. He suggests that Maibock is a good beer style for the spring.

Something new

A major event for beer drinkers and people interested in learning about new beers will be the Michigan Brewers Guild's 11th annual Summer Beer Festival on July 25 and 26 in Ypsilanti.

The festival is expected to feature more than 200 beers from more than 30 Michigan breweries.

"If someone really wants to see what these beers are like, that's a good place to start," Rogers said.

Brewers in Oakland County offer a wide variation in their beers year-round and there's something for everyone who likes beer whether people are

willing to be adventurous outside their comfort zones or not.

Briggeman said Stout is an example of something that people often like once they get used to it.

"It's an acquired taste," he said, adding that people might think, "Oh no, beer's supposed to be yellow in color and taste like water."

"The reason we make that many different beers is because we know people have different palates and tastes. Part of what we like to do is educate people on different beer styles."