

CRAIN'S BLOGS

Nathan Skid

Table Talk

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Exclusive look at Griffin Claw, where Corktown atmosphere and championship beer await

Workers are putting the finishing touches on the **Griffin Claw Brewing Company** in Birmingham ahead of its official July 18 opening.

The brewhouse and micro-distillery, located at 575 S. Eton St., next to **Big Rock Chophouse**, is coming together nicely. Its dark wooden bar and tabletops, along with the polished concrete floor, create an atmosphere you would expect to find in Corktown or Ferndale.

But the finish is a little too polished, the etched beer glasses a little too upscale, the brewing facility a little too precise to fit in with Detroit's growing D.I.Y. crowd.

In my opinion, the highlight is Griffin Claw's handsome patio complete with communal seating, a fire pit and what will become ivy-covered walls.

If the food is anywhere close to as good as Ferndale's **One Eyed Betty's**, this place should have no problem becoming an area favorite.

When asked if the project came in at budget, founder Norm LePage laughed and said Orion Township-based **Powers Distributing Inc.** upped its initial order to more than 13,000 barrels of beer, prompting the owners to purchase five, 120-barrel fermenting tanks to keep up with potential demand.

One barrel of beer is equivalent to about 31 gallons, or two kegs.

LePage said they have spent about \$400,000 on kegs alone.

In all, Griffin Claw owners have invested more than \$5 million into the project.

Griffin Claw is owned by Bonnie LePage and Mary Nicholson; Nicholson's husband, Ray Nicholson, is a co-owner of **Big Rock/The Reserve** banquet center and an adjoining condo project. (For more on the back story, [click here.](#))

The distillery and martini room is not scheduled to open until the fall, just in time for some wintertime imbibing.

And join the conversation; we have a really cool new commenting system that allows for more direct contact with our writers, so feel free to chime in.

ANDREW TEMPLETON | Crain's Detroit Business



Brew master Dan Rogers won two gold medals at the World Cup of Beer in 2010.