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New labels and savvy craft masters

LOCAL FLAVORS

Beer Buzz

After the Heurich Brewery closed in 1956, more than 50 years passed before D.C. claimed another “production” facility (one distributing beyond its site). But now vats bubble up all over town with inventive beer meisters tapping local history and music for inspiration. Even the White House concocts its own brew with honey from the South Lawn’s beehives. So cork the champagne, and toast the new year with craft beer!

By Brooke Sabin and Kelsey B. Snell





Port City's
 Bill Butcher

Hop to It

Six new craft breweries make this a beer town

DC Brau

Story | With its April 2011 opening, DC Brau became the city's first production brewery since the Heurich. Its founders Brandon Skall and Jeff Hancock met as DJs spinning at local clubs.

Place | Quirky murals like Pixel Pancho's "Robot Reindeer" brighten the venue in northeast D.C. On Saturdays (noon to 4 p.m.), DC Brau offers free tours and tastings plus glassware and growlers for sale.

Brew | The distinctive cans, which display a diamond pattern inspired by D.C.'s original shape, hold a variety of ales—Belgian-style, India pale and one dubbed "The Public," a hops-heavy local favorite. Skall and Hancock also develop recipes in collaboration with bands and other breweries like Bluejacket. In summer 2013, they worked with Heurich House Museum to recreate a pre-Prohibition beer. 3178-B Bladensburg Rd. NE, dcbrau.com

Atlas Brew Works

Story | A self-proclaimed "beer dork" since college, Justin Cox elevated his home brewing in October 2013 when he opened Atlas with friend (and expert West Coast brewer) Will Durgin.

Place | The brewery name comes from its northeast zone, deemed the "Atlas District" after anchoring art deco Atlas Theater on H Street. The depot (once a newspaper distribution center) holds up to 2,300 barrels—that's 4,600 kegs. Tours and tastings happen Saturdays from 1 to 4 p.m.

Brew | Try the citrus-and-spice Rowdy rye ale flagship or La Saison Des Fêtes, the malty winter seasonal. Connoisseurs await the springtime debut of a "secret beer" currently aging in oak barrels from Middleburg, Virginia's Boxwood Winery. 2052 West Virginia Ave. NE, Ste. 102, atlasbrewworks.com

Port City

Story | Vintner Bill Butcher traded grapes for grain and opened Port City in January 2011. The first brewery in Alexandria since Prohibition takes its name from the city's role as a colonial seaport and takes its logo from a view of the 1855 Jones Point Lighthouse.

Place | A former lighting-supply warehouse holds the immaculate brewing operation where Wednes-

day through Sunday tour leaders invite the curious to taste wheat, sniff hops and admire the "hop-zooka," a contraption that allows brewers to add bitter flavoring without introducing air. A tasting room offers samples of each brew (\$9 with tour) plus T-shirts, glasses and growlers to go.

Brew | Consider trying one of Port City's five standards like the crisp, unfiltered Optimal Wit, which claimed a gold medal at the 2013 World Beer Championships, or the limited edition Revival Stout, given a subtle briny flavor with the addition of local oysters during the brewing process. 3950 Wheeler Ave., Alexandria, Va., portcitybrewing.com

3 Stars

Story | After getting their start in 2007 with home brews (and admittedly mixed results), longtime pals Dave Coleman and Mike McGarvey devoted themselves to research and in August 2012 opened 3 Stars, named for the D.C. flag.

Place | In a brick warehouse near the Maryland border, the duo (sporting matching beards) offers tastings and growler fills Thursdays from 5 to 8 p.m. and Saturdays from 1 to 5 p.m. Free tours take place Saturdays at 2 and 3 p.m. With a nod to their early days, they offer a home brew shop with beer-making ingredients and equipment.

Brew | Bold flavors reign here. Think caramel, coffee and chocolate (the Pandemic porter) or toasted pecans (the Southern Belle imperial brown ale). Cask versions of the brews earn complexity with aging and ingredients like vanilla bean and lemon peel. 6400 Chillum Pl. NW, threestarsbrewing.com

Chocolate City

Story | Cofounder Jay Irizarry originally created the brewery's spring-summer 1814 ESB (extra-strong bitter) for a home brewing competition. Now joined by suds-savvy Noah Cowles, the locally focused team of brewers delivers kegs in person to restaurants and bars District-wide. (Look for the red fist tap handle!)

Place | Just south of Catholic University, the nanobrewery occupies

a former stone-cutting studio that may have supplied materials for the nearby shrine. Saturdays from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m., patrons come to Chocolate City to buy growlers (\$16) or fill their own (\$10).

Brew | Locals know these brews by their patriotic monikers like the Cerveza Nacional de la Capital, a dark black lager, and the upcoming release named 8th & I Rye for the address of the Marine barracks and Cowles's service in the Corps. 2801 18th St. NE, chocolatecitybeer.com

Bluejacket

Story | Brewmaster Megan Parisi, a pioneer woman in a man-heavy craft, runs Bluejacket operations alongside Greg Engert, beer director and renowned hops king. The pair embraces Old World brewing traditions, even as they experiment with ingredients from avocado honey and figs to fresh air.

Place | Bluejacket's behemoth, three-tier, 5,600-square-foot brew space, once a U.S. Navy boilermaker factory, houses sour and non-sour barrel rooms plus a variety of fermenting tanks including the "coolship" for extra-funky styles.



Bluejacket

Brew | Of the 20-plus original beers, standouts include James & The Giant, a Belgian strong ale brewed with Pennsylvania peaches, and the tart brown Trouble with notes of dark fruit and pumpernickel. 300 Tingey St. SE, bluejacketdc.com