

BY AMY LASKOWSKI

Taste

MAKERS

At Harpoon and Brooklyn Breweries, BU alums are crafting the next generation of beer

A smooth, full-flavored beverage with dark fruit and licorice notes in the aroma. Pairs well with beef and earthy cheeses.

The description above is not some sommelier's assessment of a \$42 pinot noir; it comes straight from Harpoon Brewery, and it describes Leviathan Baltic Porter, one of more than 60 beers that have been made by the eighth-largest craft brewer in America.

Al Marzi, Harpoon's chief brewing officer, says the flavors and aromas that his recipes produce result in a beverage imbued with character, not vanity. "Craft beer is sociable," says Marzi (COM'90), who started at Harpoon as a truck driver 21 years ago. "It's not snobby. It's accessible to everyone. That's what we want people to take away."

Beer has changed. The thin, tasteless stuff has been replaced by a multitude of brews that for 25 years have been challenging and rewarding us with a whole new idea of what beer should taste like. President Barack Obama, for example, thinks it should taste like the White House Honey Ale that is home-brewed at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

"Americans were kind of a laughingstock 20 years ago when it came to beer," says Garrett Oliver (CGS'81, COM'83), a leading beer expert and brewmaster of Brooklyn Brewery, in Brooklyn, N.Y., one of the 2,075 craft breweries in the United States. "But today, the American craft beer scene is representative of beer in the world. Now, America is where the excitement is coming from."

None of those breweries, whose leaders include Harpoon, Brooklyn Brewery, Sierra Nevada, New Belgium Brewing Company, and Boston Beer Company (maker of Sam Adams), make more than six million barrels a year. And while six million may sound like a lot of barrels, it's all relative. Anheuser-Busch InBev, maker of Budweiser and Corona, sold 106 million barrels in 2010—10 times as much as the entire craft industry.

The Brewers Association, a national trade group for independent brewers, reports that craft beer sales represent 9.1 percent of the \$95.5 billion U.S. beer market. The industry saw a 15 percent jump in sales in 2011, a year when beer sales dipped 1.3 percent as a whole.

This after a 12 percent increase in 2010 and a 10.3 percent jump in 2009. And craft beer experts predict that the 2,075 craft breweries—more than have existed since 1890—will increase by 900 in 2013.

Beer has been a staple in this country ever since the lack of it compelled the Pilgrims to stop in Plymouth, Mass., when the *Mayflower* ran dry (beer was safer to drink than water). In the 19th century, immigrants from Germany and other beer-drinking countries arrived with few belongings, but many recipes for beer and ale. By the 1890s, there were roughly 2,000 breweries in the United States, and every one of them was officially closed in January 1919 with the ratification of Prohibition. When Prohibition was repealed 14 years later, America's history of flavorful beer was stunted by the Depression, as brewers resorted to less expensive grains like rice and corn.

It wasn't until the last decades of the 20th century that American brewers got their groove back, thanks in large part to home brewers with entrepreneurial aspirations. When Harpoon was founded by home brewers in 1986, the company was granted Massachusetts Brewing Permit 001. It was the state's first







AL MARZI

Q: WHAT IS THE RIGHT WAY TO POUR A BEER?

A: I hold the glass at an angle and start the pour down the side of the glass. About halfway through, I straighten out the glass and pour in the middle in order to end up with about an inch worth of foam. Then I swirl the beer in the glass to release the aroma before I take the first sip.

brewery start-up in 25 years. Harpoon produced 500 barrels of beer that year; by 2012, it was up to 200,000 barrels.

After graduating from the College of Communication, Marzi looked for a job in advertising. When a friend introduced him to Harpoon cofounder Rich Doyle, Marzi proposed that he handle the young company's advertising. Doyle said he had an opening for a truck driver. "I drove the truck for 10 months and learned a lot about the industry just from being inside the bars and restaurants. I became head brewer and went to the Siebel Institute of Technology in Chicago. When I got into the industry, you could do that kind of thing—start in the mail room and work your way up."

WEB EXTRA
Watch videos of Al Marzi, Garrett Oliver, and Helder Pimentel talking about their passion for beer, and of the folks behind Brooklyn Brew Shop, at bu.edu/bostonia.

Oliver lived in London for a year after leaving COM; he found himself in a pub the first night he arrived. The barkeep handed him a pint of room-temperature ale in a "dimpled fishbowl" and a whole new world of

beer was unveiled. When Oliver returned to New York, he started brewing at home, and in 1987 he cofounded the New York City Homebrewers Guild. Two years later, he became an apprentice at the now-defunct Manhattan Brewing Company. He joined Brooklyn Brewery in 1994.

"There's nobody who goes into beer brewing as a business," he says. "It all comes from passion. You fell in love with it first, you found it fun, and then you did it professionally. That's what makes American craft brewing powerful."

Oliver, now the editor of the *Oxford Companion to Beer*, believes that the interest in craft beers is part of a wider enthusiasm for artisanal foods. Today, he says, there is a beer to be paired with just about any dish, from Mexican to Japanese, barbecue to Michelin-starred. A stout can be matched with a dessert to pull out the chocolate and chestnut flavors, or a light, citrusy Belgian witbier will balance a delicate fish.

These days, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* regularly write about new beers as if they were movie releases, the interest in home brewing

has soared, and specialty beer stores all over the country carry hundreds of different types of craft beer from around the world.

Meanwhile, all-women beer clubs like the Pink Boots Society and Ladies of Craft Beer encourage women to home-brew and become craft brewers. Smaller microbreweries, like Peak Organic in Maine and Eel River Brewing in California, make beer with organic ingredients, and others use bourbon barrels to age their beer. And in November 2012, Anheuser-Busch InBev, which sells the craft-like beers Goose Island and Shock Top, formed its own Craft Advisory Board.

With the 900 new breweries expected to open this year, and planned expansions at larger craft brewers like Harpoon and Brooklyn Breweries, some in the industry worry that the craft beer movement might become too big for its market.

But Marzi doesn't buy it. He can't imagine that beer drinkers who appreciate the newer brews will ever go back. "It simply becomes a part of what you do," he says. "It even changes your taste in food. You don't go backward."



GARRETT OLIVER

Q: IS THERE A TYPE OF GLASS THAT'S BEST FOR DRINKING BEER?

A: *The best glass depends on the type of beer and where you are. Snifters are great for powerfully flavored beers, because you can pay close attention to flavors. Small glasses can be best for parties, and the curvy British pint glass is just right for bitters, pale ales, and IPAs, especially if you're at a pub. The ubiquitous shaker glass has no character at all; I've never met a brewer who likes them.*

The Couple Behind BROOKLYN BREW SHOP

AT THE HEIGHT of the recent recession, in 2009, Erica Shea (CGS'04, COM'06) and Stephen Valand (CAS'07, COM'07) quit their jobs to invest in beer. The former film majors realized that most home-brew kits made five gallons of beer at a time, far too much for a typical New York City apartment. They also saw that the instructions on existing kits were hardly user-friendly, with words like “acidulation” and “fluctuation.”

“We wanted to demystify brewing by taking it back to the kitchen,” says Shea. They also wanted to sell home-brew kits and ingredient mixes for small-scale brewing in tiny city apartments. They named their venture Brooklyn Brew Shop.

The entrepreneurs started sawing and rejiggering plastic tubes and clamps to make a better, simpler kit, one that included most ingredients a home brewer would need (grain, hops, and yeast), as well as clearly written, foolproof instructions.

Luck was with them. The couple's first sales outlet was a booth at the Brooklyn Flea Market. The flea market happened to be right across the street from a Whole Foods store, whose proprietors took an interest in the home-brew kits. Whole Foods put 30 kits on its shelves. Less than three hours later, they were all sold. The next day, it happened again.



ERICA SHEA AND STEPHEN VALAND

Q: I AM NOT A BEER DRINKER. WHAT SHOULD I TRY?

A: *Our go-to beer for newcomers is the superlight and lemony Sorachi Ace from Brooklyn Brewery. It's complex while still easy drinking. For dessert lovers, we recommend Pretty Things Baby Tree out of Cambridge, Mass. Dark and full-bodied, it's perfect with rich chocolate dishes. A nice all-purpose beer is Allagash White Ale from Maine, which is light, delicious, and everyday drinkable.*

Now Brooklyn Brew Shop kits are sold in Whole Foods and Williams-Sonoma stores across the country, in Europe, and in South Africa. The product has been featured in the *New York Times*, on NBC, and in *Food & Wine* magazine. Shea and Valand use their

film skills to produce simple, step-by-step home-brewing tutorials. They have teamed with Brooklyn Brewery to sell that company's ingredient mixes, and they hope to cut similar deals with other breweries. Their first beer cookbook, 2011's *Brooklyn Brew Shop's Beer Making*

Book, explains how to make beers as varied as a lobster saison and a bourbon dubbel.

“Beer that you make on your stove is yours entirely,” Valand says. “No beer in the world tastes exactly like it.”

“And,” says Shea, “it gains you a lot of friends.” AL

Like the legendary masters of Silicon Valley, Helder Pimentel started his business in his garage, tweaking craft beer techniques and recipes for seven years. In 2011, after years of listening to his friends tell him that his beer was good enough to sell, Pimentel (CGS'04, SMG'06) left a lucrative banking job and launched Backlash Beer Company with partner Maggie Foley.

Pimentel says Backlash, based in Holyoke, Mass., targets a younger demographic than other craft brewers. Its labels sport a set of brass knuckles and names like Groundswell (a Belgian Blonde) and Declaration (an IPA). The company hand labels, wax dips, and stamps all of its beer. But what really sets Backlash apart, says Pimentel, is taste. "My strategy with what we brew is to make beers that would be easily respected by someone who is just exploring the craft brew space," he says. "My mission is to bring over the fringe drinkers who don't know where to begin."

Backlash is one of many start-up craft brewers that rents space and equipment from a bigger brewery, which allows it to focus on brewing and marketing, rather than building infrastructure. Pimentel spends a few days a week visiting bars and restaurants in the New England area, asking if they would like to try his beer. More than 50 restaurants and bars serve Backlash.

"I made a business plan when we started, and we've blown everything out of the water," Pimentel says. "I think the market is primed for local anything, and local beer fits into that." AL

The Up-and-Coming BREWER



HELDER PIMENTEL

Q: IS IT OK TO SEND A BEER BACK TO A BARTENDER?

A: Yes, with a good reason, such as if the beer has off flavors, like sourness or mustiness. With a draft beer, you can also avoid that scenario by asking the bartender for a sample before ordering a full beer. Most places are more than happy to let you taste it first.



GEORGE SCHWARTZ IS a historian who loves beer. A doctoral student in the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences American & New England Studies Program and a former assistant curator for exhibitions and research at the Peabody Essex Museum, his lectures often focus on what people want to hear: beer.

“There is such a range of types and styles of beer you can make that aren’t possible with wine and Scotch,” says Schwartz (GRS’14).

Unsurprisingly, Schwartz has a keen interest in the new movement to brew old beers. He notes that craft brewer

Dogfish Head has used ingredients found in a 2,700-year-old drinking vessel from the tomb of King Midas. Its Midas Touch, which the brewer describes as a cross between wine and mead, has received more medals than any other Dogfish creation.

Another small company, Shmaltz Brewing, attempted to make a batch of an English-style porter made by

Beer Goes Back to **THE FUTURE**

George Washington, using a recipe found in the New York Public Library. Schwartz says the first attempt produced beer that was overwhelmingly syrupy and bitter. When the company dialed back on the molasses, the brew was perfectly drinkable.

Other attempts to relive brewing history have lifted live bacteria from a beer bottle found in a 19th-century Baltic shipwreck, re-created a Central American fermented chocolate drink from 1200 BC, and used ingredients recorded in a 4,000-year-old hymn to Ninkasi, the Sumerian beer goddess. AL



GEORGE SCHWARTZ

“From the beginning of the colonial era, in England, through the Revolution, and into the early days of the New Republic, beer is seen as something medicinal, something good for you. Thomas Jefferson extolled the wonders of beer because he thought people were drinking too much whiskey, which was causing disease and death.”

WEB EXTRA Through March, the owners of Brooklyn Brew Shop will answer your questions about craft beer and home brewing at bu.edu/bostonia.

HOME COOKING

Tyrone Porter, a College of Engineering associate professor of mechanical engineering and of biomedical engineering, has been brewing beer for five years. He typically brews five-gallon batches in his Roxbury, Mass., home. Here, with his friend Steve Wolk, he uses a muslin bag to make three gallons of chocolate porter in his kitchen. AL



WHICH BEER IS BEST?

As a beer judge, a home brewer, and a beer writer for the website Serious Eats and for her own blog www.WeirdBeerGirl.com, Lisa Grimm (CAS'95) knows all about what makes a good brew. She trained through the respected Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP), which certifies and ranks the country's beer judges and sanctions beer competitions. Grimm, who had to pass



written and oral exams to become certified, judges several competitions a year, taking into account the BJCP's style guidelines (which break beers down into 80 or so distinct styles and substyles).

"In some cases you'll have a beer that is fantastic, but it's in the wrong category," Grimm says.

"The whole point is to provide constructive feedback to the brewers."

What should the following types of beer taste like? Here's what Grimm has to say about them. AL

LAGER should have a crisp flavor and a clean aroma and be nice and grainy. Lagers, which range from pilsners to doppelbocks, include Brooklyn Lager and Budweiser.

ALE differs from lager in the way its yeast is fermented. Ales typically have a bitter flavor and a higher alcohol content than lager. Examples of popular ales are Long Trail Brewing Company Double Bag Ale and Anchor Brewing Company Liberty Ale.

IPA is the most popular style in America, with lots of hops aroma and a malt backbone. IPAs have a piney aroma or more of a lemony scent. IPAs can be fairly bitter.

WHEAT BEER is brewed in more of a Belgian style, with a "soft feel" to it. The beer has citrusy notes and a "good head on it." Dark wheat beers can be a little sweeter, but shouldn't have an artificial taste.

STOUT beers are viscous, with a mellow, roasty flavor. Think Guinness and its variations. There is a common misconception that these beers are heavy, but Guinness is lower in alcohol (4.1 ABV, or alcohol by volume) and calories (126 in a 12-ounce bottle) than most other beers.

PORTERS were originally brewed in the United Kingdom and are the darlings of American craft brewers. Dark in color, porters are complex and hoppy, with hints of chocolate and coffee. ■