



Hops spring eternal on Beer Trail Tour

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SYRACUSE – Local legend has it that bartenders invented salt potatoes to make thirsty Irish immigrants buy more beer as they built the Erie Canal.

That tale might be blarney, but the truth of the matter is at various times between 1800 and 1920, the Salt City was home to more than 50 breweries.

The brewing industry grew after the opening of the canal in 1825 made the shipment of beer barrels easier and cheaper. The canal also helped boost Syracuse's commercial salt production. Bulky barrels could be transported inexpensively on mule-powered barges to the Great Lakes and then Chicago, where salt was needed to cure meats.

The advent of Prohibition in 1920 nearly put an end to the beer business. As the dry spell lingered until 1933, a few breweries tried to stay afloat by producing soda, spring water and "near beer."

The last historic Syracuse brewery, Haberle Brewing, closed in 1962 after 107 years of operation.

But hops spring eternal and in 1991, the Syracuse Suds Factory Brewery (www.sudsfactory.com) opened in the historic Amos Building. Now located at 320 S. Clinton St. in Armory Square, Syracuse Suds makes Black Cherry Weizen/Lambic Pale Ale, Honey Light Ale and Sweet Stout and has a restaurant on site.

Middle Ages Brewing (www.middleagesbrewing.com) began crafting British-style ales in 1995 in a converted ice cream factory at 120 Wilkinson St. Following the English tradition of open-vat fermentation, Middle Ages reuses a portion of the same strain of 150-year-old yeast imported from Yorkshire, England.

Owners Marc and Mary Rubenstein and brewmaster Jess Reaves handcraft 32 different beers with clever titles like Wailing Wench, Kilt Tilter Scotch Ale, Dragonslayer Imperial Stout and Grail Amber Ale. Don't miss the suit of armor outside the tasting room, where two cats rule the bar. The brewery is planning its 17th anniversary celebration on the first Sunday in August.

Empire Brewing (www.empirebrew.com) set up shiny stainless steel and copper brewing vessels at 120 Walton St. in 2004. Brewer Tim Butler crafts fun beers like Skinny Atlas, Live and Let Rye and Deep Purple, which contains Concord grape concentrate from Finger Lakes vineyards.

The subterranean brewery's open-performance kitchen prepares local grass-fed beef and vegetables and herbs from Empire's own garden.

Summer festivals

There are two beer festivals this summer in Clinton Square.

Summer Brewfest will feature 70 craft brewers offering 150 types of beer from 6 to 10 p.m. Friday. Live bands, food specialties and beer artisans talking about their newest creations are on the schedule. Learn more at cnysummerbrewfest.com.

The 2012 Empire Brewfest takes place July 20 and 21 with more than 300 breweries invited to showcase their beverages. Jamie Kent and the Options play at 5:30 p.m., followed by Blue Sky Mission Club at 7:30 p.m.

Brewfest (www.empirebrewfest.com) has expanded to a second day, focusing on the American BBQ Championships with pitmasters battling for grill supremacy and a \$1,500 prize.

Beer Trail Tour

If you miss the brewfests, try the informal Beer Trail Tour. A free map, available at www.VisitSyracuse.org, pinpoints the three microbreweries and three pub stops:

Blue Tusk, 165 Walton St., pours more than 70 beers in 20-ounce Imperial draughts. The pub was recognized by All About Beer magazine as one of the "top 125 places to have a beer before you die."

Kitty Hoynes, 301 West Fayette St., also serves 20-ounce pints of 16 beers on tap. The bar, which sports a "Perfect Pint" diploma from Guinness, has dark wood raised paneling, tin ceilings and stained glass images of pheasants and fishermen.

Coleman's Authentic Irish Pub, 100 S. Lowell Ave., was established as a working man's saloon in 1933 by Peter A. Coleman. His son, Peter J. Coleman, has been a publican for more than 50 years and holds court in a corner booth.

Celtic stained glass, rich wood paneling, wall sconces from an old church, a tin ceiling and loads of Irish paintings and photographs decorate the joint. "Somebody stole my 'No Bloody Swearing' sign," complained Coleman.

The pub is located in Tipperary Hill, an Irish neighborhood on the city's west side settled by canal workers from County Tipperary. Tipp Hill is famous for its upside-down stoplight, which is just a stone's throw from Coleman's at Tomkins Street and Milton Avenue.

When the traffic light was installed in the 1920s, kids objected to "British red" being on top of "Irish green." The protesters pelted the stoplight with rocks, breaking the lenses and several replacements.

The "Stonethrowers" won the argument and city officials agreed to place the green light on top. A bronze statue, which honors their efforts, was visited in 2005 by Bertie Ahern, prime minister of Ireland.

History on tap

The Onondaga Historical Association Museum, 321 Montgomery St., (www.cnyhistory.org) has a nifty exhibit on brewing. The centerpiece is a 10-foot-high statue of Gambrinus, a legendary king of Flanders and the unofficial patron saint of beer. It once graced the façade of the now demolished Haberle Brewery.

The museum has exhibits on Syracuse China, the Underground Railroad, Franklin automobiles including a 1902 roadster, the 100th anniversary of Girl Scouts and a history of editorial political cartoons. Dennis Connors, a University at Buffalo graduate, is curator of the museum. Admission is free.

German beer steins and English Toby Jugs are part of the world-class ceramics collection of the Everson Museum of Art at 401 Harrison St. Designed by I.M. Pei, the Everson (www.everson.org) houses about 11,000 pieces of art, including sculpture, photographs and video.

Roycroft pieces from East Aurora are displayed with Arts and Crafts creations by Gustav Stickley. He had a furniture factory in the area in 1901.

A frenetic fundraiser called "60/60" is planned for Friday. Sixty artists will create 60 works of art in 60 minutes.

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