

# BC's

## CRAFT BREWING RENAISSANCE



BACK IN 1984, VANCOUVER ISLAND BREWING AND GRANVILLE ISLAND BREWING BEGAN A MODERN CRAFT BREWING RENAISSANCE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA. TODAY, 25 YEARS LATER, THERE ARE MORE THAN 40 CRAFT BREWERIES SPRINKLED AROUND THE PROVINCE – WITH NEW ONES ON THE WAY – TO SATISFY THE DEMANDS OF BEER DRINKERS LOOKING FOR FRESH, UNIQUE BREWS.

**A**nd when you add the numerous local brewpubs serving their own custom creations on tap, it's not much of a stretch to say British Columbia is in the middle of a Craft Beer renaissance. Here's a look at what's going on with BC craft beer region-by-region.

### KOOTENAYS

The wild and rugged Kootenays region is home to three excellent craft breweries. Fernie Brewing produces a standard lager,

pale ale and brown ale. Over in Revelstoke, the Mt. Begbie Brewery offers six interesting brews in tall 650 ml bottles – highlighted by an excellent cream ale, an authentic German-style *kolsch* and a rotating seasonal brew.

Nelson Brewing is one of BC's most interesting and unique craft breweries. Their certified organic beers are all top-notch with two stand-outs in Paddywhack India Pale Ale – one of the best IPAs produced in the province – and Liplock Summer Wheat Ale, a seasonal *hefeweizen*.

### OKANAGAN

Penticton is home to two separate craft breweries. Cannery Brewing produces a range of interesting brews in 650 ml bottles, with two, the Naramata Nut Brown Ale and Anarchist Amber Ale, also available in six-packs of cans. Tin Whistle Brewing brews an interesting assortment of mostly darker beers, including Killer Bee Dark Honey Ale, as well as Peaches 'n Cream Okanagan Fruit Ale.

Over in Kelowna, Tree Brewing had a packaging facelift earlier this year but their



Vern Lambourne, Brewmaster, Granville Island Brewing

characteristic eight-packs are still there and the beer itself stayed the same. Tree has some interesting seasonal offerings, the best of which is the Hophead IPA, which is very popular among fans of the style.

### COAST/GULF ISLANDS

Saltspring Island's Gulf Islands Brewery offers a pale ale, golden ale and porter, as well as some interesting seasonal brews in 650 ml bottles with labels featuring intriguing historical photos. Over in Squamish, the Howe Sound Brewery sells its

excellent beers in big one-litre bottles, including Devil's Elbow IPA, Garibaldi Honey Pale Ale and Rail Nur Brown Ale, as well as seasonal brews such as the Mettleman Copper Ale.

### VANCOUVER ISLAND

Victoria's biggest craft brewery, Vancouver Island Brewing, just celebrated its 25th anniversary. Best known for its Piper's Pale Ale and Hermann's Dark Lager, the brewery recently added the Spyhopper Honey Brown Ale to its lineup.

Lighthouse Brewing has developed a strong

following for its excellent Race Rocks Amber over the past ten years. Meanwhile, Driftwood Brewing, less than a year old, is already earning praise for its mostly Belgian-style lineup, which includes the peppery Farmhand Ale, White Bark Ale (a Belgian *wit*) and Driftwood Ale, a traditional but solid west coast pale ale.

Best in Victoria, however, is Phillips Brewing, started on a whim and a credit card by brewer Matt Phillips who lived in his brewery for the first two years of operation. Phillips' diverse product line includes a barley wine, Belgian-style

brews, a beer-cider fusion and other beers with unusual ingredients, such as chocolate, maple syrup and hazelnuts. Some are sold in 6-packs and others in single 650 ml bottles.

Elsewhere on Vancouver Island, Nanaimo's Fat Cat Brewery can lay claim to one of the strangest names in the province, as well as some interesting brews, such as its Honey Ale, brewed with malty honeydew honey imported all the way from New Zealand.

### VANCOUVER/LOWER MAINLAND

Vancouver's Granville Island Brewing, which dates back to 1984, underwent a label redesign this spring and also added the Brockton IPA

to its popular neighbourhood-themed lineup. Its Robson Street Hefeweizen is probably the most popular summer beer on city patios and its rotating lineup of limited release brews in 650 ml bottles is always interesting for beer enthusiasts on the lookout for something new. Recent specialty brews include: Ginger Beer, Belgian Abbey Ale and Nut Brown Ale.

R&B Brewing has developed a steady following for its excellent lineup of ales brewed in the historic Brewery Creek area, including: Red Devil Ale, Raven Cream Ale, Hoppleganger IPA and my personal favourite local summer beer, Sun God Wheat Ale.

Head out to Surrey and you'll find Central City Brewing's Red Racer is one of the best west coast pale ales in the province, with hop bitterness that puts it almost into the IPA spectrum. Then there's Russell's dark and velvety Cream Ale which is smooth enough to be refreshing year-round.

Aldergrove's Dead Frog Brewery (the other strangest name nominee) brews an array of pale ale, lager, honey brown and nut brown ale. Over in Chilliwack, Old Yale Brewery is a small operation that produces four excellent brews: Cultus Lake Pilsner, Old Yale Pale Ale, Sergeant's IPA and Sasquatch Stout.



**MT. BEGBIE BREWING HIGH COUNTRY KÖLSCH**  
\$4.50 650 ml 688929

This is a relatively unusual German style that is mainly brewed in Köln (Cologne). An ale that is often mistaken for a lager, it is bright yellow in colour with a delicate, refreshing flavour smoothed out by a little added wheat malt. Less bitter than its better-known cousin, Pils, a glass of Kölsch is perfect on a summer patio. Save yourself the cost of the flight.



**CANNERY BREWING ANARCHIST AMBER ALE**  
\$4.50 650 ml 735100

Named after nearby Anarchist Mountain, this ale is truly the colour of amber – somewhere between golden and orange. It has a creamy body and rich, malty flavour with notes of caramel, but this subtle sweetness is balanced by more hops bitterness than you might expect, although it does not venture into IPA territory. This is very quaffable on its own or try it with a burger, steak or ribs.



**PHILLIPS BREWING AMNESIAC DOUBLE IPA**  
\$4.75 650 ml 172163

IPA lovers should line up – and bow down – for this potent brew. At 8.5 percent alcohol by volume and with more hops than any other beer you'll find in BC, you might be nervous about trying it, but after one sip you'll be sold. It has the colour of maple syrup with a creamy texture and rich body that finishes with a potent, hoppy zing. One thing's for certain: you won't forget that first sip.



**HOWE SOUND BREWING GARIBALDI HONEY PALE ALE**  
\$6.95 1L 228379

Contrary to logic, honey does not actually make beer sweeter because most sugars are fermented during the brewing process. But it does tend to mellow out bitter or sour flavours, which makes it very popular among brewers. This is a prime example: a smooth, golden-coloured ale that is very refreshing. Howe Sound's characteristic one-litre "pot-stopper" bottles are perfect for sharing.



**GRANVILLE ISLAND BREWING BROCKTON IPA**  
\$11.50 6 x 341 ml 818203

This new IPA is a welcome addition to Granville Island's popular lineup. Copper-coloured and well-rounded in the malt department with a satisfying hoppy bite, Brockton is very quaffable and not overwhelming in the bitterness department. Happy 25th Anniversary!



**NELSON BREWING LIPLOCK SUMMER WHEAT ALE**  
\$11.45 6 x 341 ml 202119

Nelson's lineup is excellent across the board but their Liplock Summer Wheat is the ideal choice for a hot summer day. An unfiltered wheat ale with a hazy golden appearance, it is not as cloudy or sweet as a true Bavarian *hefeweizen*. Light-bodied and effervescent – the extra bubbles help make it even more refreshing on a hot day. Many fans like to add a slice of lemon or orange to crisp it up.

