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Carmel

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Tiger
Woods
He's Back!

Cruisin' for Brews in Monterey County

Microbreweries Galore on the Central Coast

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Photo: Courtesy of Portola Hotel & Spa

Peter B's Brewpub, located at the Portola Hotel & Spa Monterey, brews craft beers like the Belly Up Blonde Ale, Inclusion Amber Ale, the Legend of Laguna IPA, and seasonal ales.

On the eve of Prohibition, 1,000 plus active breweries in the United States ceased to exist. While the law would be revoked 13 years later, the damage had been done. By 1978, there were only 89 active breweries in the country. But in 1982, a half dozen micro brewers took their first steps on a beer revolution so that by the end 2017 there were over 6,300.

In Monterey County, the "drought" would last longer, with the first craft brewery not appearing until 1996. Twenty-three years later, there are only five active breweries. While low in number in comparison to other counties in California, each is unique, offering their patrons a different experience in terms of interpretation of classic styles, experimentation with lesser known versions, and overall drinking and dining experience.

Peter B's Brew Pub was founded in 1996 and is the oldest brewery in the county. Named after Peter Bidstrup, one of the original owners of the Portola Hotel & Spa, it has a well-deserved following. With a seven-barrel brewhouse located onsite, head brewer Justin Rivard maintains three flagships ales: The Belly Up Blonde ale, the Inclusion Amber ale, and the Legend of Laguna IPA. The remaining six seasonal varieties provides him with freedom to experiment. Brewing twice a week in the large copper kettles displayed in the entry, the current offerings include two wheat beers, a stout, a sour, a fruit forward ale and a citrus ale.

Beyond the great brews, Peter B's offers a full bar and a wide selection of food to choose from. With 18 televisions, there is plenty to maintain your interest as you savor your brew(s).

Carmel Craft Brewing Company came about from the merger of Carmel Valley Brewing and Monterey Bay Brewing Company, and offers crowd pleasers like Mad Otter Ale, Carmel Valley Blonde and Carmel Classic.

Photo: Courtesy of Carmel Craft





Photo: Courtesy of Portola Hotel & Spa

one or more of their brews. Names like the Black Prince Porter, Big Sur Golden, Monterey Bay Wheat, and Fat Lip Amber are immediately recognizable along the Monterey Bay.

As to the future, with the recent addition of two new primary brewers, Monty and Huy, it looks delicious. One of the two winter offerings, an ale called the Good King Senseless, was, in this writer's humble opinion, amazing. Plans are to offer "one offs" a few times a year, with the first occurring this summer in the form of a Piña Colada ale.

If you find yourself craving a fresh British style brew with normal ABV and IBU levels in a welcoming environment, you would be hard pressed to find better. For an additional taste of tradition, they offer at least one cask ale pulled using a hand pump, as well Firkin night, the last Tuesday of every month. The Firkin—a 10.8 gallon cask, containing beer that has been naturally carbonated similar to bottle conditioning—is poured until empty.

Monterey Coast Brewing, located in Old Town Salinas, a stone's throw from the Steinbeck Museum, began in 2002 by Charles Lloyd and his wife, Lucy. Charles, a British expat, has spent nearly his entire adult life brewing beer. Receiving his formal training in Scotland, he later traveled to Holland and London honing his craft.

Charles brews roughly four times a year using two large copper kettles that are prominently displayed to guests and seven steel fermenters in the back. He prefers to serve his beer unfiltered, allowing it to remain on the yeast. While this can result in a slightly hazy pour, it retains freshness and prevents the loss of flavors that can occur during filtration. MCB has eight flagship styles: harvest wheat, Hefeweizen, pale ale, an IPA, a pilsner, porter, an Irish stout, and the crowd favorite, the Scottish Red. There is also at least one seasonal style available.

With a full kitchen and a selection of wines in addition to the beer, it makes for a relaxing spot to enjoy a meal. The ambience is that of the



Photo: Courtesy of English Ales Brewery

(Top) Peter B's offers clam chowder, burgers and salads to pair with their brews. (Bottom) English Ales Brewery in Marina crafts authentic English ales.

English Ales Brewery is headquartered in Marina. It began after British expats Peter and Rosemary Blackwell realized they missed the taste of fresh beer common to England. Experienced with the local pub style venues in Monterey, the Blackwells knew what they wanted and started contacting pubs in England before reaching an agreement with one in Hampshire that was willing to share recipes.

The brewery officially began in 2000, with three beers representing traditional English styles: The Penny Porter, the Pale Ale 1066, and the Ironside, their version of a Best Bitter (now known as the Corkscrew). Nineteen years later, they offer eleven different brews. Given that most of their beer is served via tap at pubs and restaurants from Big Sur to San Francisco, it is quite possible you have unknowingly enjoyed

Photo: Lindsey Klingler



Monterey Coast Brewing in Old Town Salinas serves local specialties like crispy artichoke hearts, crab cakes, calamari, local baby green salads and steaks, salmon, pizza and pasta. Handcrafted beer and local wine complement the entrees.

working man's joint, with a large exposed brick wall, industrial lighting, and worn wood floors. It would be easy to see Steinbeck enjoying such a place, throwing back a pint whilst writing his next work in the company of the region's farmers.

Alvarado Street Brewery formally opened on the street of its namesake in May of 2014 by father and son, John and J.C. Hill. In five years, it has grown to be the largest operation on the Peninsula, with three locations. The

atmosphere is fun and energetic at the flagship brewpub with its long inviting bar top, numerous tables, with a full bar and extensive food menu. Conversely, the beer garden, situated in the back, offers a more relaxing environment with

Photo: Brock Bill



The beer garden at Alvarado Street Brewery is a popular place to enjoy beers on tap and special menus. Inventive brews include the Biggie's Blueberry Brunch Bonanza, the Cryo Shake and the Double Haole Punch.

ASB's latest incarnation, Yeast of Eden in Carmel Plaza, opened in December 2018 and represents a significant divergence in what it means to be a brewpub.

overhead foliage, picnic bench tables, and two firepits with soft couches.

The Salinas tasting room opened in the spring of 2016 and is situated in the middle of the main brewing operations. This is for the beer aficionado who not only craves great, fresh beer, but also to be surrounded by the processes of craft brew.

Regardless of location, ASB offers a diverse range of beer styles, from hop forward IPA's to Imperial stouts. With humorous names like Mai Tai I.P.A., Smore's No More, and Tall, Dark and Handsome, to name just a few, it's unlikely anyone would not be able to find something to their liking.

ASB's latest incarnation, Yeast of Eden in

Carmel Plaza, opened in December 2018 and represents a significant divergence in what it means to be a brewpub. It is a place allowing J.C. and head brewer Andrew Rose to experiment with wild yeasts, bacteria and other "mixed fermentation techniques" along with locally sourced ingredients to craft truly unique beers. With the pub's California industrial vibe, its food offerings and most importantly, the brews, this is for the sophisticated palate. Beer connoisseurs and newbies can experience rare wild, sour, and farmhouse style ales, as well as some of ASB's more familiar offerings.

Carmel Craft Brewing Company is the newest brewery to the Monterey Peninsula,

yet is a company with a long history of producing quality beer. CCBC was established in September 2018 through the merging of operations of two longtime brewing companies, Carmel Valley Brewing, founded in 2007 by Dean and Carolyn Hatfield and Monterey Bay Brewing Company, founded by Mark Fitch in 2009.

Located in the idyllic Barnyard Shopping Village in Carmel, CCBC offers a selection of five "main brews" consisting of the well-known Mad Otter Ale, a blonde Ale, an amber, an IPA, and a porter. Additionally, they offer another six styles under what they term "Rotating Brews." Fitch and head brewer Marco Herrera decide on the styles of brew to be offered within the rotators, which change one to three times a month depending upon popularity. Fitch states that the brewery's goal is to offer their customers a variety of brews without being region or stylistically specific.

With an outdoor seating area and bocce ball court under construction and food offerings from local establishments, it is a comfortable location to enjoy a pint.

On the Horizon

As of this writing, there are two breweries working on establishing their presence in Monterey County. Other Brother Brewery will be in Seaside and Dust Bow Brewery in Monterey. While headquartered in separate counties, each has indicated they plan on brewing onsite.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing new breweries on the horizon is that of Belgian Pacific. Owner Fabrice Rondia has been working diligently to make his dream of authentic Belgian style beers brewed on the Monterey Coast a reality.

He has sunk two artesian wells to depths of 280 and 490 feet and recently obtained

The Alvarado Street Brewery's Salinas Brewery and Tasting Room offers an experience in the center of the operations. Draft beer can be taken to-go in Crowlers, cans and bottles.

Photo: Brock Bill



approval from the Health Department. Located in Cannery Row on the west side of the Monterey Bay Coastal Recreation Trail, patrons will be able to enjoy views of the Pacific Ocean while sipping their brews, perhaps paired with Belgian style small plates in the outside garden.

Having already built an impressive collection of Belgian beers, he plans on offering vertical tastings (same style, different vintages) of dubbels, tripels and quads. He also foresees offering horizontal tastings of brews made in Belgium, with the brewery's interpretation, as well as one or more from other local brew houses.

While Monterey County has long been associated with fantastic dining locations and delicious wines, it is slowly developing into a destination for those seeking high quality beers and drinking experiences—a huge win for all beer fans. ■



Carmel Craft Brewing Company has a pass-through window to neighboring Allegro's Gourmet Pizzeria, allowing the two establishments to share food and drinks.

Photo: Brock Bill



Yeast of Eden, located in Carmel Plaza, is a restaurant and brewpub with open-fermented beers crafted in house, along with a menu inspired by street food and the flavors of Southeast Asia and Latin America.