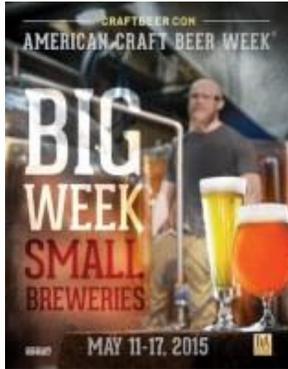


Leslie Patiño, Author

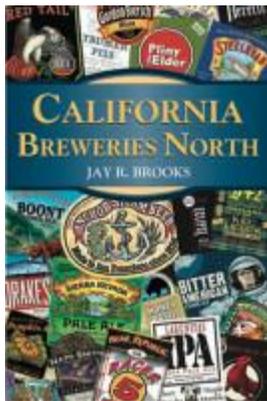


American Craft Beer Week

May 12, 2015 By Leslie Patiño



Happy American Craft Beer Week, also known as “The Mother of All Beer Weeks.” May 11-17 is indeed a big week for small breweries. ACBW, was first celebrated in 2006, and like the craft beer movement in general, it has grown every year. As [Craft Beer’s website](#) says, “Tens of thousands of beer beginners, beer enthusiasts and beer geeks toast the week each year.” Beer weeks are a great way for local breweries to showcase their offerings, foster a sense of community and draw in both regular and new customers. [Jay Brooks](#), who helped co-found San Francisco Beer Week in 2009, writes in his book *California Breweries North*, that “we’re moving away from the relative similarity of the beer festivals to more imaginative, inventive, and ultimately personal ways of presenting beer.”



In today’s market, a craft brewery that simply brews five or six unchanging ales will have a tough time competing. No matter where you live in the U.S., you’re probably within a half-hour drive of a craft brewery that’s doing something to celebrate ACBW. Events typically include brewery tours, releases of special beers, food and beer pairing dinners and tap takeovers by guest breweries.

My husband Hugo and I started celebrating early by driving over to Santa Cruz, California on Sunday, May 10 where recently opened [New Bohemia Brewing Company](#) is getting strong reviews on Yelp. Given the three very good craft breweries/brewpubs within three miles of Nubo’s (their nickname) location, these guys came on board with some stiff competition. So what are they offering to distinguish themselves? Lagers, of course.



Leslie with Clayton and Jared of New Bohemia

While most of the world’s beer consumers drink lagers, craft brewers usually produce ales. Craft brewers are a creative bunch, constantly pushing into new territory. There was a time when IPAs were new and different. Later came sour beers. These days, with craft lagers on the rise, it’s pretty clear what any brewery with Bohemia in its name is brewing. Of seven beers on tap, there were four lagers, two wheat beers (ales) and one pale ale.

While the food selection was basic (four boards—bread, cheese, meat and chocolates), employees were fine with people bringing in outside food. We sampled five of the seven beers. I’m not a huge lager fan, but if all lagers had the freshness, full flavor and smoothness of New Bohemia’s beers, I’d be singing a different song. The upstairs patio and bar were full, so we sat at the downstairs bar and

had a great time with Jared the bartender and Clayton, the New Zealand brewer working that day. If you're in the Santa Cruz area, definitely go out of your way to stop by New Bohemia.



Kevin Clark and Jason Giles of Peter B's

The next evening (last night), Hugo and I officially kicked off ACBW with the Brewer's Dinner at Peter B's, part of the Portola Hotel and Spa. Seventy dollars for dinner at Monterey's oldest brewpub sounds a bit pricey, but the three-hour evening was absolutely worth the money. We and eleven other guests dined with Master Brewer Kevin Clark in the pub's new beer cellar. The hotel's Executive Chef Jason Giles talked a bit about each dish in this five-course meal before it was served. Hugo's favorite was the cold smoked day boat scallops, mine the triple chocolate brownie sundae with stout ice cream and a hazel nut praline.



Kevin Clark uncorks a barrel-age red ale

After Giles, Clark talked about the beer paired with each dish. Hugo's favorite was a very smooth London Maple Milk Stout (dessert). I always like a good wheat, and the fruit choice in the Raspberry American Wheat (first course) gave a nice twist. We got a couple of bonus beers. Once, when Clark served a specially brewed 07270 Single Hop IPA with the fanciest cheese sandwich I've ever eaten. Then, for comparison, we were given the regular house IPA. Only the hop variety was varied in the recipe, but what a difference in flavor. Experimental hop 07270, which doesn't yet have a name, was more earthy and piney. The house IPA, with the popular Citra and Cascade hops, had a more citrus aroma and flavor. Hugo particularly enjoyed the surprise sample of an Imperial red ale which Clark drew from the tableside whiskey barrel where the brew had been aging for two months. We left with our commemorative glasses, vowing to come back on Wednesday when the pub releases its new collaboration with Drakes. Whether you're a beginner, enthusiast or geek, raise a glass of craft beer this week.