

Monterey County **The Herald**

Girl Beer Geek: Brewer Kevin Clark pivotal to Monterey's beer scene

By Merideth Canham-Nelson

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Kevin Clark, brewer at Peter B's in Monterey, is going to open his own brewery in Minnesota.

Life is like a teeter totter — what goes up must inevitably come down. So, too, is it in the beer world, where one beer geek's up can be another's down.

It was recently announced that Kevin Clark, brewmaster at Peter B's Brewpub in Monterey, is leaving for a new brewing adventure in Minnesota. When I first caught wind of this, my heart sank as I felt my side of the teeter totter drop. Though heavy in heart, I recognized that our loss was Kevin's great opportunity to spread his talent to another part of the country. After my initial shock, I started to reflect on what Kevin has meant to local beer geeks.

It is without a hint of hyperbole that I say Kevin's arrival at Peter B's was a pivotal moment in the development of the Monterey beer scene.

“Kevin single-handedly changed Peter B’s,” says Sonny Petersson, director of food and beverage for the Portola Hotel & Spa, where Peter B’s is located. “Once he took the reins, he made many improvements not only to recipes, but also to the equipment that allowed for a better quality product.”

My husband and beer travel partner, Chris Nelson, aka The Beer Geek, summed it up this way: “We needed Peter B’s to step up and act as a centerpiece for the beer community. Then came Kevin.”

When he became head brewer in 2011, Kevin worried about whether he was up to the task. “I knew that I had a lot to learn,” he admits.

Kevin was a homebrewer with no professional brewing experience when he found himself at the helm of the brewery. He read everything he could get his hands on because he wanted to create a variety of beers that everyone could enjoy and that would be stylistically accurate to satisfy beer geeks.

“Kevin’s commitment to quality and ability to replicate any style is inspiring,” admires J.C. Hill, owner and head brewer at Alvarado Street Brewery & Grill. “He’s a brewing chameleon — give him any style of beer to make and he’ll nail it.”

Kevin expanded Peter B’s standard lineup of beers to include seasonal specials and new styles he simply wanted to make. He’s offered everything from sour ales to Mexican-style lagers to porters aged in Syrah barrels. Among customer favorites is the Russian Imperial Stout, a winter seasonal brewed with the roasts from Larry Thurman at Acme Coffee.

“Kevin’s eagerness to try new things is what impressed me most,” remembers Chris Sommers, who, as director of operations for the Portola Hotel, hired Kevin. “Plus, Kevin is just fun to be around.”

It’s no secret that Kevin is a genuinely nice guy who likes to geek out about any of his passions, be it beer, vinyl records or surfing. His personality has been described as “infectious” and his unparalleled sense of humor will be missed.

During his time at Peter B’s, Kevin doubled production, developed a barrel-aging program and added more than 30 off-premise accounts. But more than that, he sparked new life into our beer community and served as its heart for five years. There is no replacing Kevin, but his legacy of quality and creativity is here to stay.

“Luckily for us Kevin has trained his team very well, so the show will continue,” says Petersson. “But it just won’t be the same without him.”

Join us at Peter B’s at 5 p.m. March 23 to celebrate Kevin’s accomplishments, show him your gratitude and wish him well with his new adventure.

Cheers for all the beery good times, Kevin!

Merideth’s many beer travel adventures can be found on thebeergeek.com. Join her for a pint at 5 p.m. every Wednesday at Peter B’s Brewpub for the live broadcast of KRML’s “Pub Talk.”