



Brewing Creativity

By Lynn Tangorra

In a state that has claimed the top spot for breweries per capita, 6.3 to be exact, owners of Gigantic Brewing, Ben Love and Van Havig, had to tap into their creative sides to produce a local brewery that has made a home and a name for itself in Portland, Oregon.

Love and Havig wanted to do something distinct from the other local brewers. Seeing as there are plenty of options for breweries in Portland, setting themselves apart was crucial. Love enjoys frequenting other pubs to see what is new, tasty and on tap.

"I always want to try new and different flavors, and that's what we built our business around, that same concept," Love says. Gigantic Brewing only produces seasonal beers and never repeats them, a tradition that is unique to this business and adds to the hype.

"Most breweries come out with the same beer at the same time of the year, each year, for a number of years," Love says. The beers at Gigantic are available for three months and then are discontinued (the brewery's only constant product is its Gigantic IPA.)

Artistic Taste

The bottles for the beers are labeled with numbers, making them collector items.

Love and Havig work with a myriad of artists for each individualized label. The talent is found through Havig's oldest friend — who happens to be Gigantic's art director — Rob Reger and

friend to the brewery, Matt Wagner. Reger is an artist who lives in the San Francisco Bay area and Wagner is the owner of Hellion Gallery in Portland. The brewery has also worked with artists worldwide from Japan, Spain, Germany and Australia.

In keeping with the unique feel of their business, Love and Havig give artistic freedom to whoever is working on the labels.

"I think one of the neat things that we do with our labels is that we don't give the artist any direction," says Love. "Most other breweries have someone doing art that is very directed in terms of what they want the product to look like. We give our artists the freedom to design what they want."

Tapping into the Community

Gigantic Brewery has become a local pub for those who work in its industrial neighborhood. The taproom that is connected to the brewery has an intimate feel, only seating 25 people. When the weather is nice, patrons can venture to the outside patio where there is seating room for 60. On weekends many beer tourists will wander in to check out Gigantic's beer along with people who have driven in from other parts of the city.

Love and Havig only have one TV in the taproom that contains a note saying, "This machine only shows Timber matches."

"Honestly if Van and I weren't fans of the Timbers (Portland's soccer team), I don't think

we would have a TV," Love says. "The taproom is our place and you are invited to come in, but obviously it's our house; we have certain rules and only streaming Timber games is one of them."

For the past two-and-a-half years, Love and Havig have made a mark on the Portland brewery map by creating drinks and experiences that are bar none. This year alone Gigantic Brewing will produce 3,300 barrels of craft beer. With the addition of one more fermenter, the brewery would have the ability to make about 4,500 barrels a year. And that would be their capacity.

"Van and I have been working brewers for so long that we knew exactly what we wanted to do," Love says. "We wanted to have a brewery where we are still brewing and still involved in the day-to-day operations. People that buy our beer want us to be brewing it because that's what keeps it at the highest quality possible."

For Love and Havig, it wasn't about expanding their business with no end in sight and only making high-quality brews — their aspiration was that people will remember their efforts in creating a place with an atmosphere that is unlike any other in town where patrons can come enjoy their unique tasting craft beers, while also enjoying the Timbers. **LGR**

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