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THINGS TO DO

Hand-crafting makes area beer

After more than a 80-year hiatus, hand-crafted beer has returned to Corvallis, bringing to the Willamette Valley the product of an age-old profession.

By Stanley Nelson

"Like the true pioneer spirit, we are not brewing for tradition, we are brewing for the here and now," says Oregon Trail Brewery head brewmaster Jerry Shadomy.

Shadomy, 40, and his wife Nancy, with hours of personal labor and volunteer assistance, have assembled the state's fourth microbrewery in the back portion of the Old World Centre in downtown Corvallis. Microbreweries traditionally are breweries that produce less than 10,000 barrels of beer annually.

Although the brewery is separate from the Old World Deli and Pub and merely leases the space, the brewery and pub accent each other. The brewery adds to the atmosphere of the deli, with the deli in turn providing an authentic brew-house feel in which to enjoy a beer at the site of its production.

After attending the first national microbrewers conference in 1984 in Denver, Shadomy says he first envisioned creating his own brewery. "It is sort of a meant-to-be-thing," he says.

The 1740-square-foot brewery incorporates a three-tiered operation, with the malted

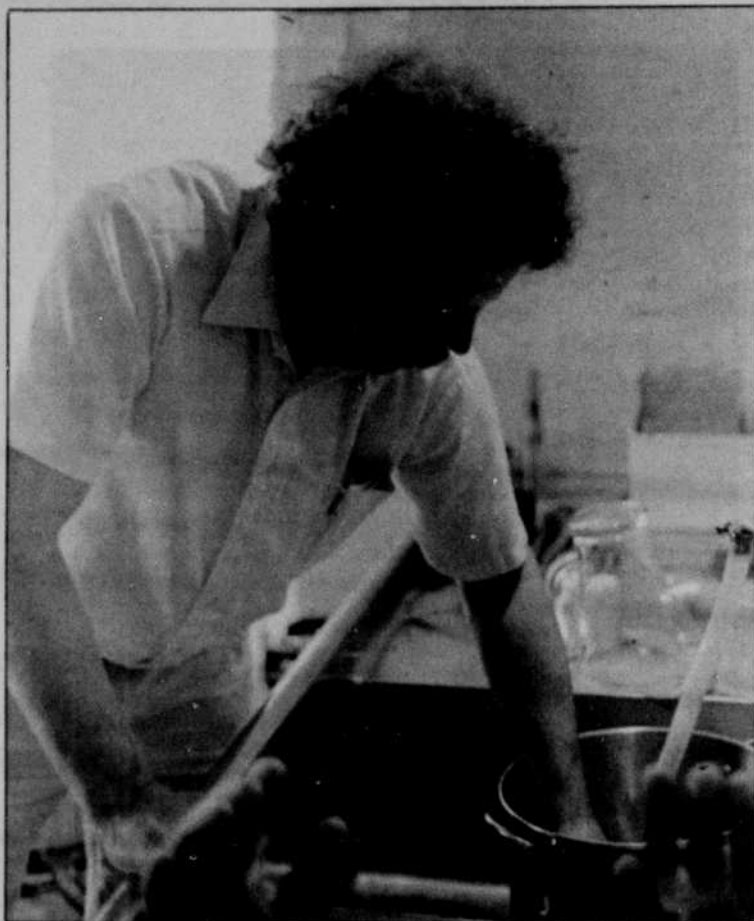


Photo by Shu-Shing Chen

Jerry Shadomy, the owner of the Corvallis-based Oregon Trail Brewery demonstrates one step in the brewing process.

barley bin and office composing the upper floor. The mash tun is housed on the second floor. There the barley is steeped in boiling water before the resultant liquor base, referred to as wort, is transferred to the base-level copper brew kettle.

The beer then is strained through Willamette Valley hops and, with the addition of yeast, is sent to the fermentation tanks back on the second floor where the beer will be racked to reduce sediment before its eventual kegging.

The resultant beer has a distinct malt taste, yet still "assertively hop with the bouquet" of the beer, Shadomy says. A variety of beers will be produced, from an Oregon Trail Ale, a Chinook Stout Ale, to the potent Original Brown Ale.

The Brown Ale has the distinction of being the strongest beer brewed in the state, with a 7.7 percent alcohol-by-weight rating, Shadomy says. In comparison,

most mass-produced beers have a 3.2 percent alcohol-by-weight rating.

Oregon Trail Brewery presently produces 14 barrels of beer a week, and the demand for the beer has far outstripped supply, he says. Projected output when in full operation is 25 barrels a week, which amounts to 750 gallons. With the acquisition of additional conditioning tanks, Shadomy says production can be further increased.

Forthcoming to the brewery will be a small-scale production of monthly specialty brew for exclusive sale at the Old World Centre. "Empirical Ale" and "Esoteric Ale" are two such beers Shadomy says beer connoisseurs can expect.

Shadomy is not a newcomer to the art of beer making. A long-time home brewer, has been experimenting with his 10-barrel personal brewery in Tangent for the last two years drawing to perfection the recipe and style for his upcoming beer.

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