

## A Valentine's Day to Remember...

By Evangeline Doyle

As the story begins, Tony and Amie are about to be wed in Las Vegas. They slipped away in February with family and a few friends for what they thought would be a small low-key ceremony.

Neither being sports fans, they had no idea that the Final Four was taking place as well as Paris Hilton's birthday bash, and four other celeb parties – hands-down one of the busiest times Las Vegas has seen.

But being the understanding people that they are, they shrugged it off. Next stop Acapulco, to celebrate their honeymoon over Valentine's Day, on a fourteen-day cruise to Puerto Rico.

Two connections later, they found themselves running for the gate in the Mexico City airport to catch their flight to Acapulco. Unfortunately they were given the wrong gate number. As they ran up to the right gate, they watched their plane taxi down the runway.

At the risk of missing their cruise ship as well, they searched for an airline with flights to Acapulco. \$400 and six hours later, they were on their way again, but without their luggage. Luggage containing Amie's wedding dress, Tony's tuxedo and their video camera.

They arrived in Acapulco, a bit rattled, still no luggage, but looking forward to their stay in the honeymoon suite Amie booked for them months prior. Tony had called from Mexico City to confirm they would be arriving late, and all was well.

At one in the morning they arrived at the hotel. As the bellhop accompanied them to their room and opened

the door, they were met by another couple enjoying their reservation. They downgraded to a smaller room with no additional guests.

In the morning, Tony looked out their window facing the bay and watched their ship come into port. He remembered saying to Amie, "wow, they are moving awfully slow – must be because they are in the bay."

Eager to begin their cruise, Tony and Amie were in the first group of passengers to arrive on the ship. No sooner were they on board, when the captain comes over the intercom, "due to unforeseen circumstances, we won't be leaving port right away."

After dropping their carry-ons in their room, they grabbed a drink and headed for the pool deck. By this time they are looking around for the candid cameras, as the pools are empty (void of water) and painters are busy on deck performing maintenance duties.

No worries...off to the casino. CLOSED. You cannot gamble in port, only on the open sea. Left with only alcohol, movies and food, they retired to their room. Another update from the captain, "we won't be leaving port tonight."

**Day Two:** Alcohol is now flowing freely due to the captain's latest announcement that "drinks are on the house."

**Day Three:** Walking around port, they purchased sun-block from the locals in an open-air market. "Turtle Block" they called it, smelled of rotten fish, but made from dead turtles. One hour, and one incredible sunburn later...perhaps the locals misunderstood what they were looking for. (Google "Turtle-Block" and you'll find a quilter's pattern,

but no reference to sun-block.)

Over dinner, another report from the captain (perhaps he thought it would be easier to take this news on a full-stomach), "coming into port, the ship struck an object... we cannot make repairs here...this cruise is canceled...we will get back to you with your return travel arrangements." At that time numbers were dispersed to passengers, similar to the DMV, to assist with the return home process.

**Day Four:** Multiple announcements have been made but no numbers have come up for Tony and Amie. (Or had they?)

**Day Five:** "Here's how you're getting home." Upon asking, they were told "all that is left are buses back to Mexico City." A six-hour bus ride awaited them.

**Day Six:** Three flight connections later... "Welcome to Portland."

**Day Seventy-Five:** Luggage arrives on door step, autographed by someone named Rudy, and appearing well-traveled. Contents intact. Amazing.

When I asked Tony if they had plans for this Valentine's Day, he chuckled "No."

*Congratulations Tony and Amie Krieger! They are the winners of the "Best/Worst Valentine's Day" reader's challenge. Tony and Amie will receive a \$50 gift basket compliments of Sentry Market, Cafe 47, Vernonia's Voice, Buckeberry Cottage and Out-on-a-Limb.*

## Beervana - In Search of the Perfect Porter (or Stout)

By Scott Laird

*Nirvana-noun: an ideal state, condition attained by the extinction of desire, union with the supreme spirit. -- Webster's Dictionary*

*Beervana-noun: union with the supreme beer, an ideal state attained by the extinction of desiring good beer. -- Vernonia's Voice*



I like Beer. To clarify - I like good Beer. And to be more specific - I like good, dark, Beer. And since this is February, I might as well go ahead and say it - "I love good, dark, Beer!"

Anybody who has spent more than a little time with me knows that I enjoy a good Porter or Stout, although I have been known to hang out with a few Ambers, Reds or Bocks, and occasionally with a Lager or a Pale Ale, especially if you're buying.

According to Northwest Brewing News there are over 1,400 breweries in the United States, over 160 in Oregon and Washington alone. Since moving to the Pacific Northwest almost fifteen years ago, I have developed an appreciation for the darker beers. With this local proliferation of micro brews, brew pubs, and hand crafted beers, I have found myself almost in beer heaven. And now a little slice of heaven has arrived in Vernonia.

Winter is the time of year when breweries produce more dark beers. The season lends itself to the heavier, richer, more full-bodied styles. One thing I enjoy is trying new and different beers when I find them in the grocery or when visiting a brew pub. One thing I haven't yet tackled is making my own beer or home brewing.

Home brewing has become a small industry of its own with stores that specialize in ingredients and supplies and websites devoted to the art. It can be a fun hobby, a social activity, competition, and in some cases an obsession.

Vernonia resident, Brett Costley, has been brewing his own beer for about fifteen years. Tasting someone's home brew can sometimes be a real adventure - you never know what you're going to get. Like the time my friend showed up for a party with a keg of home brew that he had cask conditioned with bourbon. Turns out my friend makes a good beer-flavored-bourbon which wasn't a totally bad thing.

Brett Costley has developed a good home brew system by acquiring the right equipment and developing some tasty recipes. Brett Costley makes a good beer. Brett recently committed to brewing some batches for the Blue House Café in Vernonia that were on tap there before the flood. I recently spent an afternoon with Brett while he worked on the Pale Ale and the Oatmeal Porter that he brewed for Blue House Café, and I later got a chance to taste the end results.

For someone so enamored with beer, it turns out I didn't know very much about what goes into actually making it. Brett explained his process to me. Although not overly com-

plicated, brewing beer involves a number of steps, a lot of patience, an attention to detail, and then some good karma (karma-noun one's destiny as determined by conduct). There is a lot of opportunity for something to go wrong. Here is the simple version: First you start with the grain, usually barley (some recipes call for adding oatmeal, wheat or other grains) which has already been put through a process called malting when the home brewer purchases it. The malted barley, or malt, is then cooked, extracting the sugars. This is called mashing. The mash is then rinsed, or sparged, with warm water, releasing the sugars and leaving the wort - mostly sugar water with some trace elements like proteins and flavonoids.

The wort is then boiled which sterilizes the beer. Hops are added during the boil, contributing to the flavor. The more hops, the more bitter the beer. Next comes fermentation when yeast is added and the sugars are converted to alcohol. Fermentation takes seven to fourteen days. All that's left is some aging, allowing for a blending and mellowing of the flavors. This is when the carbonation happens as well. Different styles require different techniques and ingredients. But you get the idea.

So how did Brett's home brew stand up to some of my other favorites? The Oatmeal Porter was a little light in the carbonation, making it a little flat. It had a murky, somewhat cloudy appearance. But the taste was solid, clean, full and smooth - a nice effort. And it went well with my Veggie Gyro. A very drinkable beer, even more so since it's brewed right here in Vernonia.

Brett was currently working on a batch of Scottish Ale and a batch of Cherry Vanilla Wheat Beer that will be unveiled sometime in February when the Blue House Cafe reopens its doors after receiving extensive flood damage in December.

### Some of My Favorite Dark Beers

- **Monkey Face Porter**, Cascade Lakes Brewing Company - **Redmond, Oregon:** The name alone makes it worth a try. Tasty and chocolaty, though a bit light. Available at the Black Bear in Vernonia.
- **Pipeline Porter**, Kona Brewing Company - **Kona, Hawaii:** A limited release, this coffee flavored porter is bold yet smooth. Kona makes quality beers.
- **Snowplow Stout**, Widmer Brothers Brewing - **Portland, Oregon:** Only available in winter, I get so excited when the Snowplow arrives! This Milk Stout is creamy with a silky finish, and tasty. Each bottle cap has a unique prost, or a toast. Available at Vernonia Sentry and many other local grocery stores.
- **Walking Stick Stout**, Walking Man Brewery - **Stevenson, Washington:** A fine example of an American Style Stout. I got to try this on tap at the brewery in October. Walking Man makes some of the best brews around-their Homo Erectus IPA is legendary, their Black Cherry Stout may be my all time favorite!
- **1554**, New Belgium Brewing - **Fort Collins, Colorado:** Makers of the famous Fat Tire Amber, the brew masters searched and found mention of this Brussels style black beer dated from the year 1554, and styled this beer from that recipe. Smooth, mellow, and delicious, one of my favorites, when I can find it.
- **Black Butte Porter**, Deschutes Brewery - **Bend, Oregon:** The old standby. Much more famous now than when it won a personal taste test over ten years ago. Still our house beer at home. Their **Obsidian Stout** is also a classic. Anything Deschutes makes is usually a quality beer. I got to taste **The Abyss Imperial Stout** at the brewery this summer. Only sold in half pints there because of the 11% alcohol content. According to Men's Journal, October 2007- "The best stout in the world." Amazing flavor, with a hint of bourbon. Big and bold. What a beer! A new batch was expected to be released on January 14th, 2008. Find it and try it!

So there you have it, a February love story about making beer. And what's not to love - making your own beer can be rewarding, enterprising, help you make friends, and just plain fun. Just remember to drink responsibly and be safe. And don't forget to support your local brewer.