

BIG BEER DREAMS

Oakshire Brewing Company on a roll By Sam Marx

With the arrival of summer, it's only expected that the people of Eugene will be drinking more beer to stay cool. The guys at Oakshire Brewing Company must be aware of this, because they're stepping up their operation in Eugene — big time. With the help of new brewer Joe Jasper and new brewmaster Matt Van Wyk, in addition to upgraded facilities and plans for bottling, the Oakshire brewers are certainly bringing their A game to the Eugene beer market.

"We've increased our talent base significantly, specifically in the brewery," says Jeff Althouse, who originally founded Oakshire Brewing Company with his brother Chris in late 2006 (back then, you would have known it as Willamette Brewery). In January of this year, the Althouse brothers hired Joe Jasper, who formerly worked at Pyramid Brewery and experienced a brief time at Deschutes Brewery before joining the Oakshire crew. "He really is extremely talented, very knowledgeable and very much a production brewer," Althouse says. "He came here and added a level of professionalism to the brew house."

New brewmaster Matt Van Wyk adds yet another level to Oakshire's operations, according to Althouse. "He has a lot of recipe formulation experience," Althouse says. "He's brewed a huge wide range of beers." Van Wyk, who won Small Brewpub Company Brewer of the Year at the 2006 Great American Beer Festival, plans on bringing new ideas to Oakshire's production. "[He] really understands the national scene and really understands consumers and what they're looking for," Althouse says. "He also knows how that intersects with the creative things he

wants to do." Together, "The two guys we have have complementary skill sets."

Van Wyk's move from a brewpub to a production brewery appears to be no easy feat, however. "The scale is different. We sell a lot more beer than a brewpub," Althouse says. Last year Oakshire made 1,100 barrels of beer; this year, they plan to make 2,200 barrels, a huge number compared to most brewpubs. "There's just some opportunities on the production side that aren't available in a brewpub."

With a new, larger staff in place, Oakshire can now begin to implement their new beer programs, including a small barrel aging program. "We just have two barrels right now," Althouse says, those being their Overcast Espresso Stout and Watershed IPA. He also hints at future plans for doing some Belgian styles of beer and some sour beers. "There's a lot of different things that we've talked about that we will continue to implement as we grow."

Recently, Oakshire released a summer seasonal beer, Line Dry Rye. "That's out right now in Eugene," says Althouse. "If Eugene drinks it all, which it looks like they may, I'm not sure that Portland's gonna see that beer just yet." Other recent releases were the Perfect Storm Imperial IPA and Glen's Hop Vice double IPA, both brewed for the Sasquatch Brewfest in early June. There are no new beers being brewed otherwise, unfortunately, as expansion is taking up most of the brothers' time. "We're installing an 80-barrel tank," Althouse says, which is 2,480 gallons of beer. "We'll have to brew five times to fill one of those."

Beyond the new tank, there's also about to be a new way for Eugeneans to drink the tasty stuff. "Our first bottling run is on the 16th of July," Althouse

Matt Van Wyk



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says. The Watershed IPA and Overcast Espresso Stout will be the first styles to be put into 22 ounce bottles. "That will just be a Eugene release to start," he says. "We really want to focus on Eugene. This is where we live, this is the market we love, and so we're making sure to get the beers out here first and make sure we've got enough to satisfy Eugene." Tastings are also taking place at the brewery from noon to 4 pm on Saturdays, giving people a chance to come and try the beer.

When asked about the beer scene in Eugene, Althouse says, "You have to love the explosion of a market in the business you're in." He adds, "People in Portland are saying, 'Wow they're making some good beer in Eugene,' so it's kind of put-

ting Eugene on the map where Portland always kind of got the limelight."

Expansion naturally comes with growing pains, as Althouse has been finding out. "It does point out the inefficiencies in your process," he admits. This doesn't stop him from dreaming of a big future. "There are lots of dream beers. We want to make sure that we have programs in place where any beer that our brewers dream up can be made." Having a variety of barrels such as whiskey, pinot noir and chardonnay for aging beer is going to be one priority at the brewery. "The dream is really to have the absolute most creativity that a brewery can possible have. That's the plan." ■

*Oakshire Brewing Company, 1055 Madera Street.
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Urban Brewery's
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organic 22s

- Hopworks IPA
- Crosstown Pale
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\$4.75

This Portland-based 100% organic "eco-brewpub" was started by Christian Ettinger, a U of Oregon grad, after winning the 2004 World Beer Cup Champion Brewmaster award. HUB is **Oregon's only 100% renewable energy brewery.** Every aspect of production is part of their efforts for zero waste in the brewing process, from using their fryer oil as biodiesel to fire the brew kettle to the use of multiple recycled materials in the construction of their brewery.

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