

CRUX-A-POSITION

Bend's newest brewery blasts off BY PATRICK NEWSON

CruX Fermentation Project, which opened its doors June 30, sits on an 11-acre plot of land adjacent to Highway 97 smack in the center of Bend. Open space for hop-growth, concerts, barbecues and a dog-park pale in comparison to the majestic East Cascade view reflected in the glass, copper and stainless steel of the new brewery in town. Most of those shiny tanks at CruX haven't had a chance to be used yet.

Larry Sidor, brewer, owner and wrench-wielding auteur of the Fermentation Project, leads me through his facility. It's "a brewery that happens to be a pub," he says. Sidor is sensitive about the subject of brew pubs without breweries. At CruX, however, transparency is a part of the aesthetic. Conditioning tanks fill the glass-walled room behind the bar; recycled wood strapped with old iron belts form the counters and pub tables which, when not choked by crowds, will function as packaging and boxing stations for the eventual bottling line Sidor aspires to install. Before all that, though, the first project must be completed: beer.

Sidor, former brewmaster at Deschutes, whose parting gift to his previous place of work was the Chainbreaker White IPA, has not recently released any beer, but is holding in-tank an East-bold IPA hopped with Centennial, Cascade and Bravo, registering a citric 7.5 percent alcohol by volume.



Closer to public dissemination is a deliciously hoppy Northwest Pale Ale I sampled from the fermenter, as Sidor showed me some of the more storied equipment he has at his disposal. The mill, for example, is the first that Sidor ever operated, 38 years ago as a novice at Olympia Brewing in Tacoma, Wash.; the hop-vac, gifted to Sidor from BridgePort Brewing as a favor; and Sidor's personal beer cooler, sitting beside his cluttered desk within earshot of the bar, has "seen more hops than most Oregon breweries," he reckons, due to its decades-long former occupation as the daily-refreshed hop-sample storage locker at a large producer. And all this sits in a former Aamco shop and mill supply store.

The CruX hopper is just down the hall, in the main pub area. A wooden sliding door opens to a walk-in, temperature-controlled room from which waft rich scents of pine, skunk and citrus permeating the public forum with the obvious quality of product.

For Sidor, quality product is the primary goal. After working for years on the systems of others, Sidor's own fermentation project, complete with open-top fermenters, barrels and other avenues of brewing exploration, is to employ the rock-climbing term, the crux, the most difficult and satisfying part of Bend's beer scene. ■