

the Eugene Production Brewery provides perfect cellar conditions for barrel aging beer,” MacBeth says. “We have several down there now and are excited to add more.”

MCKENZIE BREWING CO./ STEELHEAD BREWERY mckenziebrewing.com

McKenzie Brewing Co. is the outside sales line of Steelhead Brewery (they had to grab an additional name due to trademark issues), which makes it a stalwart microbrewery at 23 years old.

Brewer Ted Fagan says McKenzie Brewing has been hard at work this year on bottling and distribution. “We’re hoping to get a production brewery going here within the next year,” he says. “We’re unfortunately not quite there yet. We’re looking to reach capacity here by the summertime in our current facility and we’re looking to expand.”

Fagan adds that McKenzie Brewing wants to open a production facility at an additional location in Eugene, and ideally they’ll do that within the next year. “Things tend to move a little slowly, though,” he says. “Other than that we’re selling a lot of kegs of our Hopasaurus Rex IPA, our Hazy Hef and Twisted Meniscus IPA, as well as various other seasonals.”

If it’s food that beer lovers are looking for, Fagan says a stop at Steelhead is a smart idea. “We’re getting some changes done in the kitchen, revamping the menu at the restaurant right now and getting some wonderful new food out there.”

MCMENAMINS HIGH STREET wkly.ws/1rg

The McMnamins chain is 65 locations strong, with three in Eugene, but only High Street brews its own beers. Brewer Hanns Anderson took the helm at High Street two years ago. “Being a relatively new brewer, I learned a lot that first year, and now it’s starting to come together for me,” he says. “I’m pretty proud of the quality of my beers. I’ve been getting better and better.”

Anderson says he’s especially pleased with this season’s Grandma Betty’s Quilted IPA, for which he’s adjusted the recipe and switched hops since last year. He also makes the McMnamins “big four,” the Hammerhead Ale, the Ruby Ale, the Terminator Stout and a rotating seasonal. “Those are the recipes they give me, and everything else is entirely up to me,” he says.

With those recipes and the financial backing of McMnamins, Anderson says he has a lot of freedom. “It’s great in the sense that I have full autonomy. The downside is that for about eight months of the year I’m extremely busy,” he says. “But this is such a good town to make beer in. We’ve got a really supportive beer community and brewer community. It’s just really special.”

NINKASI BREWING ninkasibrewing.com

Ninkasi Brewing, already the area’s largest brewery, had a banner year, completing an expansion that more than doubled its brewing capacity and added to its office and hosting space. The company also focused on distribution, making Nevada its seventh state.

Co-founder and CEO Nikos Ridge says that finishing the expansion is a major milestone two years in the making. “Now we’ll focus on stabilizing after a couple years in flux with all this construction,” he says.

But Ninkasi isn’t resting on its laurels. Instead, it has big plans for their bigger facility. “We just released our Prismatic Lager series this year,” Ridge says. “Due to our expanded capacity, we can now make lagers on a year-round basis. We’ll continue to expand on our R&D, which is our single-batch Rare and Delicious series, as well as continue our single-hop beer explorations, and continue to go from there.”

OAKSHIRE BREWING oakbrew.com

In its first year in the Whit, Oakshire co-founder Jeff Althouse says there are two things he’s most proud of:

“It’s making some of the best beer in the world — and having a great time doing it — and taking care of our customers in the public house.”

Those are qualities that Oakshire has been consistent about over the past year, releasing brews on Tuesdays, hosting food trucks and holding the inaugural Hellshire Day & Barrel-Aged Beer Fest, which packed the tasting room and outdoor covered areas despite the rainy February weather.

Althouse says he’s especially proud of a brew that recently earned rave reviews on DC Beer’s 2014 “Can’t Miss Beer List,” the Hermanne 1882. Part of the Brewers’ Reserve series, the Hermanne 1882 is a Belgian golden ale blended with Muller-Thurgau grapes and aged in pinot noir barrels. “We’ll be releasing it Tuesday of Eugene Beer Week,” Althouse says. “It’s pretty unique in the way it’s produced. It uses the addition of grape juice and has a really dry effervescent flavor. We’re trying to make a beer that had that bright champagne character to it.”

Althouse says Oakshire has a number of projects in the works, including a number of small-batch beers to be released during the summer, and bike-focused events.

SAM BOND’S BREWING sambondsbrewing.com

While Sam Bond’s Garage has been a staple of Eugene’s bar scene since 1995, Sam Bond’s Brewing at the Foundry quietly enjoyed its soft open May 29 in a building that partially dates back to the 1800s. “We really are enjoying how the tasting room came out,” says co-owner Mark Jaeger. But that’s not the only place you can enjoy the 10 brews Sam Bond’s has at the ready. The Garage is serving them, and they’re beginning to pop up around town, including tastings at Cornucopia during Beer Week.

The 10-barrel brewery pays tribute to its architectural heritage by displaying artifacts found during renovation under the bar glass. There are metal parts and paper invoices dating back to at least 1935. “They’ve even pulled out fire hydrants around Eugene that say ‘The Foundry’ on them,” Jaeger says.

Sam Bond’s will install a kitchen at the Foundry eventually, but for now food trucks will keep them satiated. Jaeger says customers can look forward to the grand opening slated for some time in June, when there will be live music and food. Keep an eye on the Sam Bond’s Brewing Facebook page for the particulars.



VIKING BRAGGOT BREWERS PERRY AMES AND WESTON ZALUDEK WITH CO-OWNER DANIEL MCTAVISH

PLANK TOWN BREWING planktownbrewing.com

Springfield’s Plank Town Brewing served up its first batch just over a year ago, and the brewery has been hard at work, securing a strong reputation for its cask ales and winning Oregon Beer Growler’s Civil War Beer Tasting with its Riptooth IPA.

But to brewer John Crane, hosting a packed house for Plank Town’s Cask Ale Festival is its shining accomplishment. “We had seven, eight different casks on tap from local breweries and ourselves,” he says. “That’s one of my personal passions around here, getting the word out about cask ales.”

The next year is looking even busier. Point Blank Distribution, a company that does business with breweries worldwide, has started working with Plank Town. “And we’re going to add a 20-barrel fermenter and pick up our production a little bit, and so we’ll have a bunch more interesting beers,” Crane adds.

For now, the Plank Town crew is working on a beer in honor of Glen Falconer, the longtime Eugene brewer whose legacy the Sasquatch Brew Fest celebrates each year. “The beer itself is going to be an old-ale style, really malty, chewy, a bunch of bigger flavors, crystal or caramel flavors,” Crane says. “It’s not about the hops in this beer; it’s about the malt.”

VIKING BRAGGOT drinkviking.com

Braggots might be novel to beer fans, but they have a history going back to medieval Europe, when Chaucer wrote about them, and beyond to ancient times. Niche brewery Viking Braggot opened its doors in the summer of 2013 and began pouring the drinks, which are a combination of mead and beer.

On top of the many local taps listed on its website, Viking Braggot can now be found at a few locations in Corvallis and one in Portland.

Co-owner Daniel McTavish is most excited about what’s on the horizon. “We’re going to be bottling soon,” he says. “That will allow us to be in more places, in markets, which is really cool.”

In addition to bottling, Viking Braggot is getting ready to release barrel-aged braggots in the next few months. “We got some Buffalo Trace Kentucky bourbon barrels and we also have King Estate pinot noir barrels,” McTavish says. “You brew the braggots how you normally would, but you put it into the wine or bourbon barrels, and they sit in there anywhere from 10 months to a year and a half.” He adds that the process gives the braggots a whole new flavor. ■