



PHOTO: THE OREGON GARDEN

# Beer Festivals

**Oregon Garden Beer Festival — and more** *By Corinne Boyer*

**T**hirty minutes east of Salem, the Oregon Garden in Silverton hosts weddings, movie screenings, seasonal events and, this year, a weekend-long eclipse celebration in the 80-acre botanical garden. One of the garden's biggest annual celebrations is the Oregon Garden Brewfest.

The scenic beerfest turned 13 this year, and the three-day event featured 120 beers from 52 producers as well as live music and food trucks tucked into the garden's Rediscovery Forest.

The garden itself was designed at the request of the Oregon Association of Nurseries, and its wetlands were constructed to recycle treated wastewater. Silverton needed a way to cool its wastewater after treatment, and the wetlands accomplish that, says Sara Hammond with the Oregon Garden.

The grounds opened in 2001 and consist of a water garden, a Northwest garden, and a family- and pet-friendly garden and wetlands.

The Oregon Garden Beer fest has car, RV and tent camping options. Attendees can also stay at the Oregon Garden Resort, located on the property. The rooms are spacious and cozy and have views of the wide green expanses and mountains.

"We're always looking for new ways for guests to experience the Garden, and hope the camping will encourage them to venture and explore more areas than they ever have before," Hammond says.

To kick off the beer festivities, the Oregon Garden

Resort hosts the Brewer's Tasting Dinner — a six-course meal prepared by the Oregon Garden restaurant staff paired with special beers from selected brewfest participants. This year's dessert was a sweet lemon custard paired with a raspberry cucumber beer with mint from Mazama Brewery in Corvallis. *EW* got to sample the pairing thanks to an invite to the Brewfest.

Natalie and Jonathan Weste of Keizer have attended Brewfest for the past three years. Natalie Weste says she enjoys the location. "It's way more low-key than a lot of the Portland brew fests, and it reminds me of the festivals in California," she says.

Jonathan Weste says he likes the fact that a lot of the beers are local to Oregon and Washington.

Eugene-based Agrarian Ales is participating in the festival for the first time this year. Located on a 25-acre farm, its beers are brewed in a barn, so the end product somewhat varies, which is a good thing, Mike Naylor, with Agrarian Ales, says. Factors like humidity and temperature can't be totally controlled in the barn's environment, but "people like variety," Naylor says.

"We grasp onto the fact that we're consistent about being inconsistent," he says.

If you missed Brewfest, don't worry: There are many local beer events each year.

On Aug. 12, be sure to travel Highway 58 to Oakridge and check out the ninth annual Oakridge Keg & Cask Festival. Proceeds from the fest go to local nonprofits like the Local Food Box and the Uptown Business & Revitalization Association.

As the air begins to get crisp, check out the Sasquatch Brewfest, created in memory of Glen Hay Falconer. This year's fest will be held on Sept. 30 in the Whiteaker. The event showcases Northwest craft beer, and funds raised at the beer fest support brewing education scholarships. The Glen Falconer Foundation has awarded 38 scholarships so far.

Eugene Beer Week was held June 5 through June 11 with beer tastings, food-pairing dinners and several events at Falling Sky, Hop Valley, Ninkasi, The Beer Garden and local bottle shops. Put on to highlight the superb local breweries, Beer Week was originally held alongside the Sasquatch Brewfest to honor Falconer.

One of Eugene's largest beer events is KLCC's Microbrew Festival. It began in 2002 and features dozens of breweries with approximately 175 beers at the Lane Events Center every February. Despite being held in the dead of the Willamette Valley's rainy winter, this brewfest offers collaboration beers crafted especially for the KLCC fest.

The event also hosts brewing competitions recognizing the best people's choice, sponsor's choice and home-brew beers. Designated drivers get in for a discounted price, and volunteers are always needed to help put on the event. Volunteers receive free tickets to the festival — when they aren't working a volunteer shift.

Whether you're into upbeat events or chill, forested beer tastings, Eugene and the surrounding areas are home to some of the best brews in the country, and we're not just saying that because we live here.

Enjoy all beer fests to the fullest with a designated driver. ■

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