

A flood of Stout

With almost 60 stout beers on tap — featuring flavors from chocolate and coffee to even oysters — Fort George Brewery prepares for its third annual Festival of Dark Arts on Saturday, Feb. 14

Story by ANDREW TONRY

Of bright ales with pungent, crisp and hoppy tang, tops are popping off. In particular, “craft” brewing’s industrial revolution is lubricated by IPA. Fort George Brewery has dubbed its Vortex IPA a “contribution to the IPA arms race.”

“It’s not popular because we make it,” says Fort George co-owner Jack Harris of Vortex. “We make it because it’s popular.”

Which is to take nothing away from IPA and other hoppy beers — it’s just that they don’t offer brewers the greatest palate with which to paint.

“With an IPA,” Harris says, “people are mostly expecting the hop character, and you can’t really mess with that enough.”

Stout, on the other hand, inspires and welcomes a vastly wider taste spectrum.

“The great thing about stouts,” says Harris, “is that they’re really ac-

cepting of almost anything you want to throw into them. They’re really an excellent food-y kind of beer. There is just this incredible variety of flavor and aroma and mouth feel and texture that you can get.”

Furthermore, Harris stipulates that stouts invigorate senses of smell and taste by inhibiting sight. “They all look the same,” he says. “They all look black.”

Hence Stout Month and Fort George’s third-annual Festival of Dark Arts.

On Saturday, Feb. 14, the brewery’s block-long, two-building campus will be taken over, replete with a resplendent collection of

winking misfits, fire dancers, ice carvers, tango trucks, tattoo guns, metal workers, glass blowers, musicians, artists, and other wintry indulgence.

And, of course, plenty of stout — kegs upon kegs upon kegs of it.

“We’ll have almost 60 stouts on tap,” says Harris. “Only 14 or 15 of those will be ours.” Guest taps will come from near and far, including North Coast breweries like Buoy and Seaside Brewing, Portland producers like Hopworks and Breakside, to Oregon stalwarts such



Photo by Andrew Tonry

Jack Harris describes Fort George Brewery’s brewing processes during a tour.

as Deschutes and Sierra Nevada, to out-of-state compatriots/competitors like California’s Lagunitas and Washington’s Elysian (not to mention this writer’s personal pick, Boneyard, from Bend).

Even without the assist, though, house-made stouts on offer from Fort George will run the gamut.

“We’ve got Viva la Stout, which is a Mexican chocolate stout,” says Harris. “It’s spicy and chocolatey.” There’s another featuring cherries and Belgian Chocolate, as well those with essences of coffee, fruit, nuts, cream and more.

“We make an oyster stout,” says Harris. “We run the stout through two bushels of raw oysters until they pop open. If we’re brave we’ll eat the oysters, but they get really bitter.” The resulting beer, he says, is much smoother.

“You would not drink and go, ‘Wow this is an oyster,’” says Harris. “But it’s got a little brine-y character.” The oyster stout, however, is no modern culinary twist.

“It’s an old, old recipe,” Harris says. “They’ve been doing that for 200 years.”

The Festival of Dark Arts, in its most recent iteration, is turning three. To be sure: It is not a celebration of the profane, for which it has been occasionally mistaken.

“There were some breweries that refused to participate because they thought it was a little too creepy,” Harris says. “But it’s always been tongue-in-cheek. We’ve never done any sacrifices or things like that. But people come out and they dress up. It’s a lot of fun.”



Photo by Damian Mulinix

Fire dancer “goldfish” performs for the gathered crowd by spinning a flaming hula hoop around her waist at last year’s Festival of Dark Arts.



Photo by Andrew Tonry

Hand-drawn labels reveal the distinct personalities of each Fort George Brewery beer.

Costumed or not, Festival-goers (who would be wise to acquire advance tickets, as attendance is capped and can sell out) will be treated to as wide a variety of entertainment as stout.

Upstairs, the Fort George restaurant will become a concert venue, featuring Portland daisy-pop indie-rockers Blue Skies For Black Hearts, Astorian treasure and underground folk legend Michael Hurley, whirling percussionist Papi Fimbres and his lively Orquestra Pacifico Tropical, as well as the modern Appalachian string of Marty O’Reilly and Summer Cannibal’s fuzzy, sneering, female-fronted garage pop.

“We’ve got an ice sculptor,” adds Harris. “He uses an electric chainsaw and electric cutting tools. Solstice Forge will be here building stuff, banging on metal.” Fernhill, the glass blowing studio above Fort George, will also be offering demonstrations. In the Lovell Showroom will be

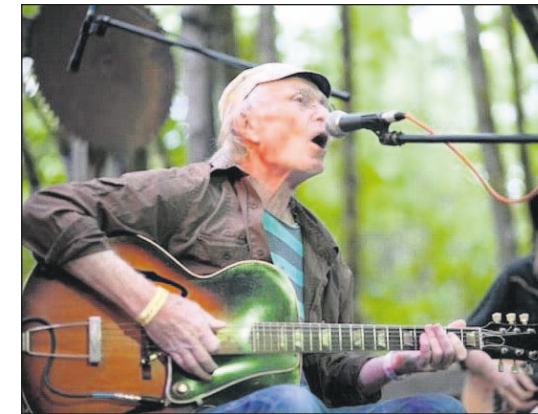
‘They’re really an excellent food-y kind of beer. There is just this incredible variety of flavor and aroma and mouth feel and texture that you can get.’

another stage with live drawing and performance. Nearby Keepsake Tattoo will needle ink into supple skin. There will be a food tent, a cigar tent and even dance lessons.

“We’ve got this troupe of people that are coming on this mobile tango cart,” says Harris. “They’re going to pull in dancing tango and jump off and teach people how to tango out in the courtyard.”

But it wouldn’t be the Festival of Dark Arts without fire dancers, a mainstay as integral as stout. The flame twirlers were included ever since the event was hatched by Harris in 2000 with curator Jessica Schleif. With the help of the Astoria Visual Arts group, it ran twice — in 2000 and in 2002 — before being resurrected at Fort George in 2013.

“I was trying to break down beer into being the art,” says Harris of the Festival’s 2000 origin. “I was trying to blend it and break down the barriers and the distinction between beer and art — I wanted them to be the same thing.”



Michael Hurley



Submitted photo by Justin Dylan Renney

Blue Skies for Black Hearts.

Festival entertainment

Fort George Upstairs Stage

Noon **Blue Skies for Black Hearts** Power pop quintet from Portland

2 p.m. **Michael Hurley** Freak-folk and snock rock, Brownsmead/Astoria

4 p.m. **Marty O’Reilly and the Old Soul Orchestra** three-man orchestra playing trance-based blues

6 p.m. **Summer Cannibals** Punk-flecked four-piece from Portland

8 p.m. **Orquestra Pacifico Tropical** Expanding the music of South America to the dance floors of the Pacific Northwest

Lovell Showroom Stage

5 p.m. **Derek Ecklund** Oregon-based multi-instrumentalist, composer, sound artist and digital creative

6 p.m. **Jessamyn Grace** Egyptian Cabaret and Turkish-style Belly Dance guru from Astoria

7 p.m. **Too Long Sparks** Dark ambient pop, discordant guitars, looping layers of found sounds

Fort George Courtyard

5:30 p.m. **Sisters of Fire** fire dancing

7:30 p.m. **Sisters of Fire** fire dancing

Other Dark Arts around the Fort

Keepsake Tattoo + Aaron Toledo

Rotten Photography

Tarot by Jessamyn Grace

The Beer Painter, Karen Eland

Glass Blowing by Fernhill Glass

The Solstice Blacksmith Forge

Live Painting

Cigar Tent

Ice Sculpture

The Dark Forest Minstrels

Submitted photo
Fort George Brewery will offer about 14 or 15 of its own stout beers and many others from local, regional and out-of-state breweries during the month of February and at the Feb. 14 Festival of Dark Arts.



Submitted photo