

Astoria Brewing Company

Worth a visit if you're interested in how beer is made

■ STORY & PHOTOS | DWIGHT CASWELL

Astoria's 81-year beer drought ended in 1996. Not that there wasn't beer in Astoria, but Prohibition closed Astoria's last brewery in 1915 ... until Astoria Brewing Co. arrived on the scene. You have only to look around to know that was the start of something big. Astoria Brewing Co. is a family operation, explains manager Andy Huber. His parents, stepbrother and two sisters are all involved in the company, which until recently was a very small four-barrel craft brewery, which primarily served the other family business, Wet Dog Café. In 2013, construction began on a much larger 15-barrel brewery that opened in late 2014.

"The Wet Dog is a very busy restaurant," Huber explains, "and we kept running out of beer. There were times that we only had eight of the 16 beers that were on the board." At the same time they were trying to supply a couple of local pubs. "We couldn't keep up with demand," he says.

Today the two brewing facilities supply not only the Wet Dog, but also three distributors who are selling the beer in Clatsop County, Portland, and western Washington. The new facility also has six "brite tanks," effectively large kegs that are used for carbonation and cold storage, in addition to the original brewery's two. This means that more beer can be stored, and it also means that beer can be pumped directly to the bar that overlooks the new brewery.

The new Astoria Brewing Co. establishment at 1196 Marine Drive is essentially a tasting room, and it is well worth a visit if you're interested in how beer is made. A gallery runs around four sides of the brewery, which is one floor below, and a bar and stools line one side. Another wall is devoted to the history of beer in Astoria. You can sit and quaff your beer (or a sampler of six beers) and watch whatever is being done in the brewery at that moment.

Brew master John Dalgren produces a variety of tasty beers. The fresh and smooth Ichiban IPA is a favorite, and the Strawberry Blonde is a perfect summer beer, made with strawberries that add a clean taste without overwhelming you with nonbeer flavors. Even those who don't care for fruit beers like this one. Other favorites: Poopdeck Porter, Astoria Imperial IPA and the sweet but assertive Bitter Bitch IPA. If you're into wheat beers, there's the Volksweissen, and don't forget the crisp and cleverly named Lincoln Lager, made in a light pilsner style.

Andy Huber's beer-making philosophy is simple: "We just make our beers tasty and consistent. We listen to what our customers say, and we don't try to do things too fast. We're looking for good quality."

So have a few beers and snacks at the Astoria Brewing Co., and if you're still hungry walk around to the Wet Dog Café, at 10th and the trolley tracks. Good food, good view, good beer, and right on the river. What more could you ask?

The Astoria Brewing Co. is open 3 p.m.-9 p.m. Monday through Friday, 2 p.m.-8 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday.



ASTORIA BREWING CO. BEERS

CHECK THEIR CHALKBOARD FOR AVAILABILITY

Lincoln Lager
4.9% ABV - 10 IBU

Strawberry Blonde
6.1% ABV - 10 IBU

Da Bomb Ale
5.2% ABV - 17 IBU

Old Red Beard Ale
5.4% ABV - 13 IBU

Bitter Bitch Imperial IPA
6.2% ABV - 100+ IBU

Solar Dog IPA
6.2% ABV - 69 IBU

Poop Deck Porter
6.2% ABV - 35 IBU

Volksweissen
6.3% ABV - 13 IBU

Trolley Stop Stout
6.7% ABV - 40 IBU



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