

Buoy Beer Company

1 Eighth Street ■ Astoria ■ buoybeer.com

■ STORY & PHOTO: HEATHER DOUGLAS | MAIN PHOTO: JIM STANOVICH

Four years ago, local entrepreneur Luke Colvin decided he would open a brewery in Astoria – and he wouldn't take no for an answer. He approached his Rotary friend Andrew Bornstein who suggested his own family's 90-year-old cannery building as an idea – but it “won't work,” Bornstein told Colvin; “the pilings are no good.”

About 20 hours later, Colvin answered back; he was on a barge under the building with an engineer. “He calls me and says,” laughed Bornstein, “I'm with an engineer and the pilings seem fine. Why else don't you think it's a good place for a brewery?”

The back and forth went on for a week: Bornstein listing off problems and Colvin finding professionals who would solve them. Finally, Bornstein was convinced. “I said let's do this, I'm in. It started to steam roll from there,” said Bornstein.

What started to take shape in 2013 was a business plan that centered around family, friendships and local community. Colvin's brother-in-law, David Kroening, joined the team of founders along with business advisor Jerry Kasinger and founding brewer Dan Hamilton.

What resulted was a breathtaking building – combining the history of Astoria, the fishing culture and of course, beer – with the Columbia River flowing directly underneath and a unique glass section of the floor to view the sea lions.

Professional brewer Kevin Shaw joined ranks; in line with Buoy's family theme, his wife Katie took on managing the taproom. Locally respected chef team Eric Jenkins and wife Jennifer Chapman rounded out the kitchen team.

Buoy is now in its third year and continues to stay true to their seafood roots. Executive Chef Eric Jenkins said “we pride ourselves on serving only fresh local rockfish for the fish and chips – our most popular selling food item; I would say that 95 percent of the time we have it but when we can't get it due to weather or fishing issues, we '86 it from the menu. We have a strict commitment to only serving fresh or not at all.

“We have a special relationship with Bornsteins,” he added. “Fish come straight off the boat, is filleted the same day and on the plate. We really couldn't get it any fresher if we caught it ourselves. What I'm most proud of though is my kitchen staff; we make everything from scratch and it's labor intensive seven days a week. They make it happen.”

Other signature dishes like the pan fried Willapa Bay Oysters feature a goat cheese pearl and jalapeno jam. Jenkins is willing to travel long distances to get the product he wants. “Today, I'm driving 64 miles round trip to a mom and pop outfit out of Nahcotta to get our clams,” said Jenkins.

Pairing food and beer heightens the experience. Jenkins recommends guests ask their server for suggestions. Head Brewer Kevin Shaw brews a spectrum of styles in hopes that there is something for everyone. “We typically have between 12-16 beers on draft so that there is something for every palate.”

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