

■ STORY & PHOTOS: HEATHER DOUGLAS



Surveying the bustling Lovell Brewery of the Fort George Brewery and Public House on a Monday morning in late summer, Jack Harris would have never imagined that the small family-friendly brewery he and co-owner Chris Nemlowill conceived of would blossom into three restaurants, two breweries, and a production facility in a short 10 years.

The Fort George celebrated its 10-year anniversary earlier this spring. Harris, a longtime resident of Astoria, and Nemlowill, who moved to Astoria when he was 2, joined forces to transform the Fort George Building – which also housed the newly opened Blue Scorchers Bakery – into The Fort George Brewery. They opened their doors March 11, 2007.

As popularity increased, The Fort George quickly outgrew its original 10-year business plan and ended up purchasing an entire street block – housing a production canning/bottling area and Lovell Showroom. In 2011, “The Taproom” was added; in 2012, a wood-fired pizza restaurant completed the restaurant on the top floor of the Fort George Building. A slice of old Astoria – a section of the Astoria Column stairs – during the 2012 renovation added a bit more history to the already historic name and location.

Harris reminisces “testing” out the Astoria Column stairs before they were actually installed in the Public House.

“We saw sections of the old column stairs sitting in an empty city lot; we inquired and got permission to use them. We tested them out by running beer, hot soup and other items on a tray up and down the new column steps. What we didn’t account for was all the people we had to pass on the way up and down,” laughed Harris.

While the Fort George originally wanted to combine the upstairs and downstairs restaurants, logistics forced them to stay separate. All three eating spaces – Upstairs Pizza, The Public House, and The Lovell Taproom – all have their own unique menus and specialties.

Harris credits his partner Nemlowill for his visionary tendencies, a knack for striking up deals, and his ambition in business. “We originally started out with 12 employees and now employ 120 people,” said Harris. “We distribute on the coast as well as Portland and as far as Boise, Idaho.”

Harris said “we never want to rest on our laurels. We never want to be satisfied with what we have – we strive for constant ethic of self-improvement – we don’t want to simply coast on our success so far.”

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Lately, head brewer Michal Frankowicz has been enjoying “The Sweet Virginia Series,” which is bottled and sold typically as a to-go item. Frankowicz pointed out that the specialty beers are a chance to try something different and for brewers to get creative. Sweet Virginia – Fort George’s original brewing system – is a place to test out everything from barrel-aged beers to sour beers to unusual IPA blends.

“In late September, we will release the “Belgian Style Quadrupel” and “Wheat Wine,” from the Sweet Virginia Series. Both will be available for a very limited time in house on tap” noted Frankowicz.

Over the years, The Fort George has offered



unique events like block parties featuring outdoor music, Sunday night music (never a cover charge) and festivals like the Festival of Dark Arts in February each year – an event typically sold out

months in advance. Their menu also accommodates special diets and maintains a dog-friendly area on an outdoor seating porch along with a rose garden up above on Exchange Street.

Harris and Nemlowill are thankful for how far they’ve come. “Without all the amazing people behind us, Chris and I would just be standing in two empty buildings,” said Harris.



Cavatica Stout

8.8% ABV
IMMENSE, CAVERNOUS, INKY
Mighty, bold, black as night, our house stout has gained a reputation for being contagious among the locals. This is no dry Irish anything, rather a strapping American Double Stout with a sweet undertow and addictive hint of bitterness. Watch for special editions aged in rum barrels and other variations. The name honors this brewer’s affinity with literary arachnids; the Latin root of Cavatica is cave, abyss, or dark place. Be forewarned, this beer will stain your clothes. Just like a stout should be.

NOW POURING AT FORT GEORGE BREWERY + PUBLIC HOUSE

- Suicide Squeeze *Special Edition • 7.2% ABV
- Fresh IPA • 6.4% ABV
- Spruce Budd • 5.7% ABV
- Shady Grove • 6.5% ABV
- 3-Way IPA • 7.0% ABV
- Galaxy Quest • 8.0% ABV
- 1811 Lager • 5.1% ABV
- Big Guns • 4.2% ABV
- The Optimist • 6.2% ABV
- Vortex IPA • 7.7% ABV
- Cavatica Stout • 8.8% ABV

- Quick Wit • 5.1% ABV
- Plaid Scotch Ale • 7.0% ABV
- Magnanimous IPA • 7.0% ABV
- Matryoshka • 12.0% ABV
- May the Oats be with You • 7.35% ABV
- Sunrise Oatmeal Pale Ale • 5.5% ABV
- Coffee Girl • 8.6% ABV
- Sucker Punch • 4.07% ABV
- Beta IPA
- Kentucky Girl • 12.5% ABV