

What's in a Name?

Names provide a means of identification for people, places, and things. When it comes to products, names are about enticing customers to try the product, or at the very least to consider trying the product.

BY PATTY HARDIN
FOR THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Let's take a closer look at beer. When you go to your favorite watering hole would you rather order dark, light, or tap, no-name beer? That's what I thought. A beer with a funky, musical sounding, or exotic name is much more likely to capture your attention, and therefore become the beer you order.

How and/or why do our local breweries name their beers?

Brad Blaser, from the marketing department at Fort George Brewery, offered this about names.

"At Fort George the names are mostly driven by the brewers. We have 8 full-time brewers, two to three of them working on our small brewing system. The rest of them work on our big system.

"One of the methods we use to come up with names goes something like this. In addition to our full-time brewers we also have guest brewers. They come up with an idea for the type of beer and write a description. This is submitted to our two owners, Jack Harris and Chris Nemlowill. Any guest brewer would work with a Fort George brewer to develop a name and recipe. All collaborations are set up by a lead brewer here. Ultimately, those beers and names would still need approval from the owners.

"In-house brewers have an online new beer submission form which goes out to a group of various Fort George departments, managers, and owners. But those recipes and names are ultimately approved by the owners. The names are left up to the brewers, and can be pulled from anything - an ingredient, a landmark, a literary reference, etc. They just need approval before it goes on the keg collar."

The naming process is a little different at Buoy Beer Company. Jessika Dart-McLean, a member of the marketing team, had this to say.



"We have 8 regular beers that are named Buoy something for the kind of beers they are.

For our small batch and one-time beers the person who makes the beer comes up with names and will often ask for assistance with the names. Our IPAs are often named "another IPA. The previous one might have been named One More IPA."

Okay. Just what does IPA stand for? India Pale Ale. It's a hoppy beer style, a stronger version of pale ale. An IPA uses more hops and has a higher alcohol content.

Dart-McLean says that their Great American Brewfest beers are named with wrestling names. "We often get assistance from our wait staff when it comes to naming beers," she says. "Our small batch beers are a creative outlet for the brewers."

"In the naming of our beers, we've always kept the emphasis on the brewery as a whole," says Dave Kroening, founder and president of Buoy Beer.

"With our core beers we haven't gotten too far down the rabbit hole of creative names. We want people to see our cans, bottles, or tap handles and think to themselves: 'There's Buoy beer; that's good beer. Which one is that?' That versus building an entire brand around each style."

Buoy Beer makes room for creative naming, too.

"With our one-offs, pilot batches, and taproom beers, the team has some fun, and the naming is all over the place from funny, to honorary, to just plain weird."

Teamwork plays a big role when it comes to naming beers. Such is the case with Reach Break Brewing. They don't have a traditional flagship line so they're coming up with new beer names all the time. Several of their beers are given scientific names, while others are named for fish. Reach Brew's brew names are typically a group effort.

Sometimes a brewer names the beer; sometimes a taproom worker names the beer. Once somebody comes up with a fitting name, Reach Break rolls with it.

"What we try to do here at Pelican is come up with names that relate to our overall branding, location and company values. That can be very hard," said Darron Welch, brewmaster at Pelican Brewing Company in Cannon Beach. "Sometimes we play off of our location or landmarks (Tsunami Stout, Kiwanda Cream Ale); sometimes it's a

"What we try to do at Pelican is come up with names that relate to our overall branding, location and company values. That can be very hard."

reference to our mascot, Phil the Pelican (Beak Breaker, Beak Bender). Sometimes it relates to our values and who we are as a company (Five Fin West Coast Pilsner).

"The fact of the matter is, naming beers is a lot harder than designing them," Welch added. "With the number of breweries in the US these days, the chance of coming up with a truly original names gets ever smaller. We simply try to come up with ideas that are true to our brand, but that are also catchy at some level. Sometimes we succeed, sometimes not so much."

The next time you visit one of our local breweries take a little time to ponder the processes involved in naming beers. Then sit back and enjoy your chosen brew, the one whose name sang a promise of pleasure.