

# Brewing at Fort George

BY WILLIAM DEAN

Just in time for its 15th anniversary, Fort George Brewery has reclaimed the top spot in Coast Weekend's Readers' Choice Awards.

No longer just a local craft brewery, Fort George has now grown to regional size, with the bulk of its production shifted to a cavernous Astoria waterfront facility. But at its downtown roots, where the Lovell Taproom offers views of the brewery's more artisanal brewing process, small town friendliness and service are very much in evidence.

Cheerful bartenders at the brewpub and smiling waitstaff at the wood-fired pizza restaurant help customers escape the pressures of daily life. Seated at the bar, chatting with new friends and sipping a draught City of Dreams IPA, one can hardly dispute the results of Coast Weekend's 2021 Readers' Choice Awards. This year, Fort George won first place in the Best Bar/Brewery and Best Brewpub categories. The brewery also garnered top honors for Best Pizza and ranked third in the Best Music Venue category.

"We really want to provide an excellent place for beer and food, and people getting to know each other," Fort George marketing and sales director Brian Bovenizer said. "Meeting new people is always cool," he added. Besides the brewery and restaurant's mellow, family friendly vibe, Bovenizer credits the lure of a variety of beers on tap, ranging from popular staples to intriguing special concoctions and collaborations with other cutting edge breweries on the coast.

Even though Fort George didn't win the music venue top prize, Bovenizer, himself a musician, was thrilled that the brewery's free Sunday concerts rated highly. "It's always been a big part of what we do to give back to the community," Bovenizer said. Last year, North Jetty Brewing in Seaview, Washington, claimed the Readers' Choice Awards for Best Bar/Brewery and Best Brewpub. Throughout the region, competition among beer makers continues to grow, with another brewery set to open in Astoria early this summer.

Fort George opened in March of 2007 with a modest eight barrel brewhouse, revitalizing two downtown Astoria buildings. Its offerings were instantly in demand, so much so that the brewery has continually expanded its capacity. It is now the sixth-largest craft brewery in Oregon, expected to fill 34,000 barrels this year. It's an impressive local gem, well worth the visit.



Photos by William Dean

**ABOVE:** Special beers age in barrels mere feet from the taproom. **RIGHT:** Enjoying a frothy pint at Fort George Brewery's inviting brewpub. **BELOW:** The brewery offers gathering places inside, topside and outside.

