

The art of brewing a fine beer

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the water gets hot enough, he stands and loads the grain to be mashed.

Checking the consistency of the grain as it empties into the mash tun, Dwyer can tell just by looking whether the grain is being too crushed or not crushed enough.

Brewing is hands-on and sensory. There are schools that teach the chemical complexities of brewing, but Dwyer's acute perception of his brew isn't anything he was taught in school.

Dwyer has been brewing for 16 years, though for the first 10 he was a home brewer making small batches.

"I'd say 90 percent of the brewers out there started as home brewers," said Dwyer.

He has been working at Mackinaw Brewing since it opened in April, 1997. He served as then-brewmaster Mike Kenyon's apprentice.

Working with a new system, they had to learn the nuances of the brewery Mackinaw installed. Those early conversa-

tions, discussions and debates, coupled with Dwyer nearing his 500th brew at Mackinaw Brewing, have led to his current awareness and understanding of his brewery.

The wort has started to trickle into the brew kettle. Dwyer knows how the wort trickle should look and sound, and the slightest deviation in his expectations is met with a quick adjustment.

From the brew kettle, the wort is sent downstairs and emptied into a fermentation tank where it is kept for seven to 10 days. From the fermentation tank, it is filtered and kegged.

At any given time Mackinaw Brewing Co. has seven regular brews on tap. Depending on the season and how busy the restaurant is, Mackinaw Brewing may have up to 11 beers on tap.

The special beers are generally seasonal, and sometimes Dwyer will design a new brew. But it's critical that a new brew be sellable.

"If I'm going to make 200 gallons, I have to sell 200 gallons," said Dwyer.

Dwyer is also responsible for the development of the beers for the establish-



Record-Eagle/Andy Taylor-Fabe

The crushed grain is fed into the mash tun along with hot water, forming a sweet liquid called wort.

ment. Like a composer hearing the parts of his symphony as he writes it, Dwyer is able to plot with great accuracy what kind of beer he wants to make on paper. He can set temperatures, grain measurements and types, hops and color on paper, and he won't be too surprised by the outcome of his formula.

This is not to say that the first batch is perfect. But over time and brews, Dwyer is able to make subtle changes to a new brew that improve it with

each batch.

"I want to brew something exciting," says Dwyer. "Designing a new brew is a process that is 80 percent inspiration."

Microbreweries and brew pubs in the region:

CHARLEVOIX

Boyne River Brewing Co. Beer and snacks, tap room, beer to go; 12 p.m.-7 p.m. Thu.-Sat. 419 E. Main, Boyne City. 582-5588.

GRAND TRAVERSE

Mackinaw Brewing Company Full-service bar and restaurant with indoor and outdoor seating;

tap room, brewery tours, beer to go; 11 a.m.-1 a.m. Mon.-Sat., 12 p.m.-10 p.m. Sun.; 161 E. Front St., Traverse City. 933-1100.

North Peak Brewing Co. Full-service bar and restaurant with live, outdoor entertainment, indoor and outdoor seating; tap room, brewery tours, beer to go; Happy Hour 3 p.m.-6 p.m. Open 11 a.m.-midnight Mon.-Thu., 11 a.m.-1 a.m. Fri. and Sat., 12 p.m.-10 p.m. Sun.; 400 W. Front St., Traverse City. 941-PEAK (7325).

Traverse Brewing Co. Bar and restaurant with live entertainment; tap room, beer to go; 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Mon.-Fri., 12 p.m.-5 p.m. Sat.; 11550 U.S. 31 S., Williamsburg. 264-9343.

MANISTEE

Lighthouse Brewing Company Bar and restaurant with live entertainment, indoor and outdoor seating; tap room, brewery tours, beer to go; 11:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Mon.-Thu., 11:30 a.m.-10 p.m. Fri. and Sat.; 312 River St., Manistee. 398-2739.

OTSEGO

Big Buck Brewery & Steakhouse Bar and restaurant, tap room, brewery tours, beer to go; 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Mon.-Thu., 11 a.m. to midnight Fri. and Sat., and 12 p.m.-11 p.m. Sun. 550 S. Wisconsin St., Gaylord. (989) 732-5781.

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