

Tannery Run Brew Works opens doors in Ambler



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PUBLISHED: March 26, 2019 at 9:26 a.m. | UPDATED: September 24, 2021 at 10:52 a.m.

AMBLER – The borough’s new Tannery Run Brew Works brewery and restaurant may owe its inspiration to the Tannery Run Creek that runs below the building on East Butler Avenue, but it is the dragon that is perhaps its most identifiable mascot.

Drawings of the mystical creature can be found in several places in the restaurant, from a beautifully drawn mural in the dining area to the pub’s logo itself, which features two dragon heads in a circular yin-and-yang representation.

For the brewery’s founders and operators, when it comes to the business of beer, the two dragons represent two of the three main ingredients in brewing: hops and malt. The dragons, they say, also speak to the mythical part of beer and its allure.

Finding just the right recipe to achieve that allure has been an ongoing goal for Timothy Brown, as well as fellow operators Carly Chelder and Mac Comly, ever since the three decided to open a brewpub several years ago. Even after its opening day on March 15, the three continue to refine their recipes to find the right balance of taste and quality.



So far, Brown and Chelder said, the response from the Ambler community has been much more than they expected.

“I was overwhelmed by the support,” Chelder said of the opening day turnout there. “And the sheer volume of people that day – it was beautiful. And the weather was gorgeous.”

Chelder, who serves as marketing and outreach coordinator, said the brewery’s location does offer advantages when it comes to visibility and accessibility, as it is snuggled among shops and businesses along the walkable East Butler Avenue.

Construction on the brewery started in June of last year, but Chelder said she’s been paying rent on the space since October 2017.

“We had been holding this space for a while. We knew it was a special location,” she said. “With the Act II Playhouse right down the street, you see dinner-and-a-movie and dates and drink nights. This is prime real estate.”

The business features a ground-level taproom and kitchen, as well a spacious, unfinished basement downstairs that offers tantalizing business opportunities once it’s completed as part of phase two. Chelder said she envisions that space will be used for private parties, community events and shows. She added that there’s been no shortage of interest in booking parties there.

In addition to its selection of beers, the pub offers a rotating food menu that includes tacos, soups, flatbreads and sliders. Finding a unique, quality identity has been important not only for its beer but also for its food.

Serving as chef is Gina Cavalier, whom Brown and Chelder met through the local Weavers Way Co-op.

“We’re big volunteers with the co-op and have been since the Ambler Food Co-op started organizing seven years ago,” Chelder said.

“Gina just came in and ran with it,” she added. “She’s an incredible chef.”

An honors graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Cavalier’s background is in fine dining and wine. She admitted that working in a brewery is new for her, but she welcomes the challenge.

“I’m learning a lot,” she said.

And she has some ideas.

“I really don’t think too many breweries are doing kick-ass food,” Cavalier said.

“I’m trying to do a rotating menu, trying to embark on that pop-up idea – the same foundation like tacos or sliders or salads but deconstructed differently every time.

“I’m trying to keep the concept of fresh and healthy and trying to keep it light to go with the beer,” she added. “I feel like the beer is the star. We’re a brewery. I feel like the food should just compliment it.”

“We’re not your typical pub. You’re not going to find fries,” Chelder said. “It’s really impressive what Gina is doing.”

Himself a nationally recognized beer judge and brewer, Brown said he does most of the brewing there with Comly and another brewer who is a graduate of the University of the Sciences brewing science program.

“Our system was tweaked specifically for our split-batch brewing system,” Chelder said.

Brown said the brewery’s seven-barrel system was originally fabricated for Door County Brewing Co. in Door County, Wisc.

“They were upgrading,” Brown explained. “They were a seven-barrel system, and they wanted 15. They took the system back and reconfigured it for our system.”

As far as the beers he’s produced so far, Brown said there have been some early standouts.

“I’m already seeing, from the first week being open, there are certain ones that are more popular, particularly our Sympathy for the Devil. It’s a Belgian tripel [beer], brewed in conjunction with a pilsner,” he said.

Chelder said the restaurant’s liquor license allows them to sell Pennsylvania-made spirits, wines and ciders.

“We don’t need a very expensive liquor license,” she said. “We have a nice selection with the license we have.

“Pennsylvania has come a long way in their liquor laws, but there’s still room to grow there,” she added. “I think that we’re working pretty well within those limitations. As of 2016, breweries can now sell at farmers markets. That’s a beautiful thing. We can plug into that. That’s another source of revenue for us.”

Although Tannery Run Brew Works does not, at this time, sell takeout beers or do crowlers, it does expect eventually to do contract brewing with other local restaurants.

“For now, we’re keeping as much beer in house as well can,” Chelder said.

Tannery Run Brew Works is located at 131 E. Butler Ave. in Ambler.

Learn more about Tannery Run Brew Works at tanneryrun.com.

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