

Hopped Up!

The O.C. beer scene explodes, as craft brewers and suds lovers go for the gold—not to mention the amber and chocolate brown!

| By Joshua Lurie | Photography by Edward Duarte |

San Diego may draw the beer spotlight in Southern California, but Orange County has built its own beer identity, with more breweries than L.A. and an overflow of bars and restaurants that are drawing locals crazy for craft beer.

O.C.'s elder statesman is **Hollingshead's Delicatessen** (368 S. Main St., Orange, 714.978.9467, hollingsheadsdeli.com), a 46-year-old, beer-centric—and eccentric—deli in an Orange strip mall. Ken Hollingshead, son Kenny and grandson Michael make this a family affair. German oddities and rare California microbrews like Russian River's Consecration fill the 16 taps and 450-plus bottles. Green Bay Packers memorabilia line the walls and handwritten sheets of yellow paper list menu options like the deviled egg salad sandwich on squaw bread.

Bob Ziemer arrived on the O.C. beer scene in 1968, opening Zeb's World Famous Boathouse in Santa Ana. The city condemned the building, but he re-emerged in 1984 with **Henry 'n Harry's Goat Hill Tavern** (1830 Newport Blvd., Costa Mesa, 949.548.8428), Goat Hill being a bygone name for Costa Mesa. The funky décor (and sometimes aroma!) includes sawdust-sprinkled floors, wall-mounted goat heads and the nose cone from a Korean War airplane. "In the old days, you just had Budweiser, Coors and Miller," says Ziemer, but Sierra Nevada paved the way for craft beers to enter the market. Goat Hill now hosts 141 taps. Ziemer's sons—"the guts of the organization"—now choose the beers, but you can still find Ziemer playing shuffleboard.

With the Goat just across the street from **Yard House's** first O.C. location, claiming "the world's largest selection of draft beer" takes confidence. But there's little doubt that the Long Beach-born, O.C.-based brand (yardhouse.com) has taken the beer pub/sports bar to a whole new level, and with dozens of locations across the country, it's taking SoCal beer culture nationwide.

Seal Beach might seem like an unlikely locale for one of Orange County's best beer bars, but that's exactly where chef/owner Gabriel Gordon opened **Beachwood BBQ** in 2006 (131½ Main St., Seal Beach,

TAPPED IN
Clockwise from top: Tons of taps at Crow Bar and Kitchen in CdM; beer barrels at the Bruery in Placentia; the bar at Hollingshead's Delicatessen in Orange; this one's for you at TAPS in Brea; chilling out at Hollingshead.



562.493.4500, beachwoodbbq.com). And why not, what with all the Irish bars already on downtown's Main Street? Gordon rotates his 24 taps on a daily basis and leans heavily on Belgian and SoCal breweries. If you ever want to know what's pouring, Gordon streams his blackboard menu online via the innovative "Hop Cam." To complement his beers, Gordon smokes beef, pork and chicken with a mix of applewood, pecan and oak.

In 2007, developer Steve Geary opened **Crow Bar and Kitchen** (2325 E. Coast Hwy., Corona del Mar, 949.675.0070, crowbarcdm.com) on a lively stretch of PCH in Corona del

Mar. Executive chef/beer guru Scott Brandon changes his menus seasonally to optimize regional and sustainable ingredients. The sleek gastropub's 24 taps are divided by "lighter on the palate," "medium-bodied ales" and "full-flavored ales." No matter the style, you won't find mass-produced beers. They also have a sizable bottle list. "People seem to be more and more aware of the unique beers existing in the marketplace," says Geary, who plans to open a second Crow Bar with Brandon.

Haven Gastropub (190 S. Glassell St., Orange, 714.221.0680, havengastropub.com) is the latest O.C. entry, an Old Towne

Orange restaurant with a maple bar and cobblestone walls from Jeff Hall, Will Dee and Ace Patel. “There are so many great beers that aren’t mainstream,” says Hall. “People are yearning for something different that they can’t find anywhere else.” Given that, Dee works to “educate people who aren’t as familiar with the beer scene.” If a customer orders Budweiser, he’ll suggest light alternatives like Weihenstephaner or Allagash White. If you’re looking for more guidance, executive chef Greg Daniels suggests beer pairings on the menu.

Orange County residents aren’t just pouring great beers; they’re also producing them. In the ’90s, Jason Jeralds worked for Huntington Beach Beer Co. and Laguna Beach Brewing Company before striking out on his own in 1996 with **Tustin Brewing Company** (13011 Newport Ave., Tustin, 714.665.2337, tustinbrewery.com). T.B.C. is currently experiencing a resurgence thanks to new brewmaster Jonathan Porter, whose Golden Spike ale recently took gold at Denver’s Great

American Beer Festival. “Now we can say we have the best light beer in the USA,” says Jeralds. “Our beer quality has just gone through the roof,” and Porter’s just beginning. He recently added barrel aging and Japanese chile-spiked IPA to his repertoire.

In Brea, **TAPS** brewmaster Victor Novak crafts traditional European ales and lagers. Most recently, his roster included malty English-style Burton Ale and hoppy California Gold. Novak brews 25,000 gallons of beer per year for TAPS (101 E. Imperial Hwy., Brea, 714.257.0101, tapsfishhouse.com) and is gearing up to curate the beer program at The Catch, reopening near Angels Stadium and featuring 20 taps. “I plan on making up a stellar beer list of mostly American craft beers, with roughly half going to local craft brewers,” says Novak. “I want the place to have a real Southern California emphasis and feel.”

A Placentia warehouse has become a beer destination thanks to O.C. native Patrick Rue’s full-tilt Belgian-style beers. **The Bruery’s** tasting

room (715 Dunn Way, Placentia, 714.996.6258, thebruery.com) is open on weekends and draws crowds for beers like White Oak, a Belgian strong ale that’s brewed in bourbon barrels that impart a distinctive vanilla flavor. The Bruery recently caused a frenzy with the release of Black Tuesday, an Imperial Stout that honors the 80th anniversary of the Great Depression and clocks a whopping 19.5 percent ABV, making it one of the hardest-hitting U.S. beers on record.

Rue acknowledges that the county is “at least 10 years behind San Diego’s beer culture,” but he’s impressed with O.C. advances. “The number of craft beer bars that have opened in Orange County in the last year is astounding. I’d be willing to bet it’s more than anywhere else in the U.S.”

When it comes to the future of the local beer scene, TAPS’ Novak says, “O.C. has very passionate people, brewers and publicans who will make sure no one in the area will have to drive too far to taste some of the best that the brewing world has to offer.”

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BEER HERE!

Clockwise from far left: Brewmaking at the Bruery; going with the grain/hopping to it; pour us a pint at Crow Bar and Kitchen; what’s on tap at TAPS.