
Draught beer to go

Take home a growler or a pig

DON TSE

When Village Brewery (villagebrewery.com) started selling its beer — primarily draught — they knew their fans would want to take some home.

At the time, no one else was doing growlers — two-litre bottles of beer — creating an opportunity to fill a void in the market.

“It is fun to build a [product] category,” Village’s Jim Button explains. “They’re great for sharing with friends and neighbours.”

Sharing beer and general camaraderie play directly into Village’s ideology — “it takes a village,” they love to say. As such, the environmentally friendly, reusable bottles were a perfect fit.

Although Village offered growlers from day one, Brew Brothers Brewing Company (brewbrothers.com), whose draught beers have been available since ’94, only recently started

BOOZE

Brew Brother Alan Yule recalls how customers at the recently renamed Design District Urban Tavern (607 11th Ave. S.W.; realpubfood.com) or next door at Rhino Smokehouse (amsterdamrhino.com) frequently asked about getting Brothers’ beer for home consumption.

So, Brew Brothers started offering growlers from their brewery, downstairs from Design District and Rhino. Yule calls it “draught beer to go.”

“We use a counter-pressure method [to fill the growlers] that keeps the beer fresh and properly carbonated,” he says, explaining the trick for ensuring a good shelf life. (Village also uses a counter-pressure filler.)

Meanwhile, Wild Rose Brewery (wildrosebrewery.com), which also offers beer in standard bottles, tried a different route — essentially a mini keg called a party pig — allowing customers a more versatile draught beer experience. It’s ideal not only


for home use, but also for barbecues, camping or anywhere else (where, ahem, you’re allowed to drink).

“Each pig holds 8.5 litres of premium Wild Rose craft beer,” says Wild Rose general manager Jamie Vadori. “That’s about 25 bottles of beer.”

A flexible bladder inside the pig shrinks as beer is poured out, so the remaining beer is protected from oxygen damage and can stay fresh for four to six weeks.

“Customers love being able to replicate the draught beer experience at home — their portability, the fact that there are no empties to worry about and, of course, the beer inside,” says Vadori.

Pigs are available at the Wild Rose Taproom (4580 Quesnay Wood Dr. S.W.) and are returnable and refillable. Wild Rose now has over 2,000 pigs, each individually and creatively named for tracking purposes — you may think a “Papa Smurf” is a lame old man, but you’ve never seen him filled with 8.5 litres of beer.

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