

Celebrating a year of beer

The future looks bright for hopheads and malt mavens

DON TSE

A year ago, Craft Beer Market opened its doors to a new era for beer in Calgary. That was 365 days, 13,694 kegs and 1,232,460 pints of beer ago.

"The response has been awesome," says Rob Swiderski, operating partner of Craft — which was voted "best beer selection" by our readers this year. "It's been better than we anticipated. Calgary has embraced us. The location, food, beer, atmosphere and staff

BOOZE

— everything has come together."


What has been most surprising about the success of Craft is the broad audience it has earned — achieved by having mainstream brands alongside their selection of geek beers.

While the community has been supporting Craft, the business has been quick to reciprocate by supporting charities such as Ronald McDonald House and St. Vincent de Paul. Yet support comes in other ways, including encouraging the personal growth of its employees. When asked what the best thing is that has happened at Craft in the past year, Swiderski doesn't talk about beer,

sales or profits. Instead, he says it has been "seeing how the people of Craft have grown. Young chefs stepping up to create new things. Servers growing to become managers and otherwise stepping up and growing within the business."

It is clear that Swiderski appreciates more than just good beer.

But no one is resting on their laurels. Their second year will see collaboration beers made especially for Craft by local brewers. And Swiderski is already planning, in his words, "structured growth," as he considers expanding the present location and perhaps opening new ones.

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