

Title:

Brew Pubs Today: The Revival Of A Proud American Tradition

Word Count:

691

Summary:

Remember the one-on-every corner dimly lit brew pub or tavern, beer-soaked carpeting and Joe the Bartender, a long row of customers with their glasses of watery mass-produced beer, all staring at a flickering television? Versions of these drinking establishments certainly still exist but their heyday as the gathering place of choice is over. In fact this rather depressing era was only a hiatus in America's rich brew pub history.

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Keywords:

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Article Body:

Remember the one-on-every corner dimly lit brew pub or tavern, beer-soaked carpeting and Joe the Bartender, a long row of customers with their glasses of watery mass-produced beer, all staring at a flickering television? Versions of these drinking establishments certainly still exist but their heyday as the gathering place of choice is over. In fact this rather depressing era was only a hiatus in America's rich brew pub history.

In 1634 the Puritans licensed the first brew pub in New England with ale brewed on the premises. Their idea was to steer drinkers away from the higher alcohol content of rum and whiskey. During this period, they also passed legislation ensuring the quality of the product. This tradition of local beer brewing paired with brewing excellence continued until the time of prohibition in the 1920's. European immigrants were the driving force behind this tradition, not only in transporting time-honored recipes and methods, but also in flavoring the atmosphere of their taverns with the customs and décor of their home countries. The Dutch and the English, then the Germans in the 19th century brought the family atmosphere of the old world to their adopted land.

Post-prohibition, the traditions and style of immigrant brewing were disappearing. By the end of the 1970's only light lager was selling in any

significant volume, driven by big business marketing campaigns. At that point there were only 44 breweries in the United States. Yet a movement was on the way that would reverse this trend.

In the 1970's people were traveling in great numbers. It was the in thing to do and Europe was the inexpensive destination. These travelers returned to America with a taste for real beer and an appreciation of quaffing in agreeable, charming surroundings. With a sneer of disapproval at the state of watering holes in their native land, many opened their own breweries and brew pubs in the European style. In 1982 U.S. legislation finally allowed food to be served in breweries and the brew pub was 'reborn'.

Our brew pubs today represent a resurgence of tradition and ambience reminiscent of earlier times. As beer is once again brewed on the premises or in partnership with microbreweries, twinned with pubs in which to serve their products, brew pubs have taken new pride, not only in the beverages they create but also in the brew pub venue itself. No longer supplied by wholesalers of mass-produced products, these are generally owner-operated businesses with a reputation to protect.

The European beer garden was and is an oasis in working life, a neighborhood gathering focal point offering more than just a place to drink beer. This healthy, social atmosphere is reflected in the modern brew pub. Polished mirrors, exposed beams, glasses and bottles proudly displayed, revolving ceiling fans, and menus full of imaginative twists on traditional pub fare - the modern brew pub is a showcase for the brewery's products.

If you find yourself in the position of a stranger in a strange town, dropping in to your neighborhood brew pub might be the answer. Here is a social setting ideal for meeting the locals, playing a game of darts and sampling fine quality beers, ales and ciders. If you are traveling with the family, by-pass the fast food chains and seek out the local brew pub. Many are family run and family friendly, reasonably priced with an emphasis on responsible enjoyment, and with food a cut above the cardboard box brigade. Operating as restaurants, brew pubs rarely have an age restriction.

Some of you may remember George Orwell's famous review of his favorite public house, "The Moon under Water". Though completely fictional, he describes with affection the ten best qualities of the place, from the ornamental mirrors behind the bar to the sound of children's laughter. Says Mr. Orwell, "If you are asked why you favour a particular public house, it would seem natural to put the beer first, but the thing that most appeals to me about "The Moon under Water" is what people call its "atmosphere". Given the quality and ambience of today's

brew pubs, I believe George would be pleased.