



# Craft Beer GUIDE

# Craft Brewers and COVID-19 Relief

Craft breweries are no exception to the commercial carnage created by COVID-19.

A study from the Brewer's Association reveals that the virus hurt 99% of these niche businesses.

Here are a few statistics from the March 2020 research that shows areas in which your local brewery owners may be struggling.

- 90% have experienced a decline in on-site sales.
- 58.8% noticed a disruption in distribution.
- 89% report a decrease in live events.
- 24.7% said they had stopped production.

To curb their losses and assist in the battle against the novel coronavirus, multiple breweries changed their operations to pivot during the pandemic.

## DELIVERY METHODS

With most of the country locking down and forcing tap houses, restaurants and breweries to shut their doors, brewers rushed to figure out a way to work. Many turned to eliminating their tap operations and committed to packaging in cans and bottles.

During the crisis, some changed their delivery methods by offering delivery or curbside pick-up for their



© ADOBE STOCK

beverages.

While the attempts may have kept their businesses running for the short-term, the efforts can't compare to their revenue during normal operations.

According to the Brewer's Association, nearly 40% of brewers relied on in-house taprooms and brewpubs.

## OUTDOOR PATIOS

As restrictions slowly lifted from the craft beer industry, brewers invested in building patios or arranging outdoor seating to serve limited capacities of enthusiasts. While it's a good move for business, compassionate owners are also interested in helping their guests return to a sense of

normalcy.

The founder of 18th Street Brewery, Drew Fox, said about the lockdown, "We will plan for the worst case, be smart about how we spend money and look for ways to continue to be creative."

The National Sales Director of Mikkeller, Jennifer Dicky, said, "We want to make beer

that moves people, that makes them smile. This period of unrest and uncertainty is a great time to bring some joy to the world in whatever small way we can."

The close community-based identity of craft brewing is a welcome distraction to a world facing uncertain times.

# Visit a Tap House

If you're lucky enough to live in an area with a tap house, you can find a multitude of craft beer options. Whether the facility only features locally brewed beverages or a list of popular drinks from around the country, expect to be introduced to your new favorite beer.

A tap house differs from a typical bar by offering many more choices, styles and alcohol volumes, usually at a significant value.

If you enjoy visiting your local tap house, do the owners a favor by sharing your thoughts about the experience on online review sites. The Harvard Business Review suggests that 89% of consumers read business responses to these statements. Highlight positive interactions to encourage peers to visit a facility.

## ARRANGE TRANSPORTATION

The first rule of indulging in any type of business that offers alcohol is to arrange transportation methods responsibly, rather than getting behind the wheel. If finding a designated driver is not an option, consider taking



© ADOBE STOCK

advantage of ride-sharing services to get home safely.

Set aside extra funds to pay for the ride and tip your driver. Spending a little extra money for transportation is much cheaper than paying DUI fines or potentially putting yourself and others in harm's way.

## ASK QUESTIONS

A quality taproom will generally list their drink options on a board behind the bar and offer more in-depth descriptions on a menu. Feel free to ask questions to the tender, but be courteous when the room is exceptional-

ly busy and other guests are waiting for service. Familiarize yourself with a business's offerings before visiting by researching them online.

Look for a menu showcasing their offerings or research reviews of other patrons' favorites.

## DRINK RESPONSIBLY

If you're a newbie to craft beer tasting, it's beneficial to take it slow as some brews are high in alcohol content. Keep in mind, a good practice for taproom etiquette is to remember it is for tasting more than drinking.

# Embrace your City's Beer Culture

The businesses in your area rely on hard-earned dollars from residents to keep their doors open. They not only enhance local economies, but their operations provide a flair that is unique to their neighborhood.

Craft beer brewers are efficient in involving their communities and bringing people together for an immersive experience.

For a better perspective of the influence on craft beverages, check out these 2019 statistics reported by the Brewer's Association (BA).

- The volume share for brewers was 13.6%, which is a growth of 1.1% over 2017.

- Brewed beer accounted for 26,347,950 barrels produced by craft beer groups.

- There were 942 new openings in 2019 and only 294 closing.

- Over 161,000 new jobs were created, for a growth of 7% over last year.

In the world of IPA, ales and hops, brewers complement their local communities with passion, charitable contributions and a steady economy.

## A PLACE FOR TOURISM

In addition to speaking to local interests, craft breweries also benefit an area's tourism revenue. According to BA data,



© ADOBE STOCK

about 1.6% of craft drinkers take 10-plus annual trips to brewers more than two hours away from their home.

A separate study focused on Kent County, Mich., showed that small breweries generated \$7.05 million in direct spending from over 42,000 visitors.

The tourism industry also

benefited in profits from over 14,000 hotel room visits. Festivals and celebratory events impact local economies by inviting mass numbers of attendees to indulge in shopping and tasting.

## SMALL-TOWN GROWTH

Smaller communities

receive a significant boost as a home for craft breweries. The residents are provided a social hub to network with peers and find locally sourced beverages.

Owners of the facility are also treated to a boost in business by renting the building for events like weddings, birthday parties and corporate

gatherings.

Support these smaller businesses when they host events that showcase local talents like musicians or artists. The bigger turnouts ensure the brewery can keep up their momentum and bring more exciting activities to your community.

# American Hot Spots

If you have already tried the local offerings in your community, educate yourself about craft beer hot spots throughout the country.

Whether you visit the area strictly for a brewing experience or plan to stop by while you're already in town, you will be impressed by the taste and passion of another city's offerings.

Before visiting a new town, perform research by reaching out to the locals via social media or joining community forums. Make sure to create a plan regarding where to visit, so you don't miss out on the best a town has to offer.

If you're planning a road trip, check out a few of America's craft beer towns, as recommended by the Travel Channel.

## **BEND, ORE.**

Often considered the little brother of the booming Portland, Bend is becoming a hub for quality craft brewing. The notable Ten Barrel Brewing Co. was acclaimed for its Crush Cucumber Sour at a recent Great American Beer Festival.

The city is loaded with one-of-a-kind options from experimental outfits like the Deschutes Brewery. Or enjoy a delicious meal, paired with



Odell Brewing Company, Fort Collins, Colo.

your favorite drink in the Old Mill District.

## **FORT COLLINS, COLO.**

While Fort Collins may not be as well-known as cities like Denver or Colorado Springs, it is the home of many of the state's first craft breweries. While you're there, check out

the historic Odell Brewing company which formed in 1989. Their flagship is called the 90 Shilling Ale. It was created in a grain elevator where the brewery once operated.

New Belgium Brewing Company, known for Fat Tire and the Voodoo Ranger series, is also native to Fort Collins.

## **ASHEVILLE, N.C.**

This location is home to many tried and true breweries and up and comers aiming to make a splash in the industry. It is home to the unique Altamont Brewing company, where guests enjoy a pre-prohibition-style neighborhood pub atmosphere.

New Belgium fans can take solace in the brewery opening a new outpost in Asheville.

The Wicked Weed brewers have a strong presence in the city with a brewpub downtown, a sour and funky taproom and a 50-barrel brewery in West Asheville.

# Problems Brewers Face

You probably already know that craft beer comes in numerous styles and flavors. Brewers are often restricted to the type of beverages they create due to their location. The mineral content of local water is a significant factor in what can be produced.

Have you ever wondered why West Coast brewers excel in quality IPAs? According to Texas Tech, it's because the region's water contains the components needed to make crafting possible.

The University also notes that popular beers like Guinness, which is made in Ireland, cannot be made to the same standard in other parts of the country because of differing H<sub>2</sub>O makeups.

Crafters must simply work with what is available, and that is only one challenge these niche brewers face.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

As a craft beer brewery grows, so does its competition and commitment to creating drafts of high quality. Manufacturers are also tasked with keeping their fans loyal by inventing brews that remain true to their brand while offering new flavors.

Public relations can



© ADOBE STOCK

become a challenge for smaller operations, as those in charge are often focused on other tasks. Without a dedicated marketer on the payroll, balancing social media, advertising and creating a public persona takes a back seat to development.

One way breweries offset the competition is to work

with other teams to promote the entire industry. Joining forces benefits each outfit as a wider audience is introduced to a new, exciting option.

## GROWING TOO BIG

According to the Brewer's Association, craft beer breweries are classified as producing 6 million barrels or less annu-

ally. When an operation becomes too large or successful, corporate outfits take notice and may make an offer for purchase.

Once a craft beer "sells out," it's difficult for their loyal audience to continue supporting the brand.

Remaining faithful to their community can be a fine line

for brewers to walk. If they become too successful, they risk out-casting their loyal following in return of a significant paycheck. As a craft beer enthusiast, it's important for you to support your favorite local brands to give them the brand awareness boost that can keep them in business long-term.

# Beers Inspired by Pop Culture

There is no question that pop culture has always had a soft spot in its heart for beer.

Think back to the television show “Cheers,” with most of the sitcom taking place “where everybody knows your name,” or America’s favorite animated dad, Homer Simpson, relaxing on the couch with a can of Duff.

The craft beer industry often ties brews together with popular pop characters. Check out some of the tasty beverages that were inspired by on-screen antics.

**KNEE DEEP BREWING CO.**  
**Breaking Bud**  
**Beer Advocate Rating:**  
 92

The instant classic “Breaking Bad” was the force behind the creation of this fruity IPA. The wizards behind the creation describe its flavor as old school meeting new school. Breaking Bud includes a 6.5% ABV and combines the classic bitterness and alcohol with a hoppy taste and aromas of Mosaic.

**Honorable mentions:**  
 Heisenberg — Austin Beerworks, Heisenberg Dark — Marble Brewery

**NEW ENGLAND BREWING CO.**  
**Imperial Stout Trooper**  
**Beer Advocate Rating:** 94  
 “Star Wars” is one of the

most popular franchises in American history, so it’s no surprise that breweries are honoring it through their brews. This stout drink consists of hints of coffee, dashes of dark fruits and precise mementos of chocolate. It will quickly become a favorite of craft beer enthusiasts. The window to acquire your Imperial Stout Trooper package is limited as it is brewed once a year to welcome the winter months.

**Honorable mentions:**  
 Empire Strikes Black, Imperial Stout — Sierra Nevada

**BREWERY OMMEGANG**  
**Game of Thrones: Fire and Blood**  
**Beer Advocate Rating:** 83

Brewery Ommegang and HBO collaborated to deliver a craft beer series inspired by Daenerys Targaryen and her three dragons. “Game of Thrones” was a hit show on the cable network HBO and had a mass following of fans. The Fire and Blood brew features a deep, dark red hue with a creamy off-white head. You will notice the scents of ripe fruit, malt and subtle spice. The taste is followed with a floral and spicy hop character.





© ADOBE STOCK

# Craft Beer Celebrates the Arts

If you have spent time analyzing the craft beer coolers at your local liquor store, you have been treated to stellar artwork on cans or bottle labels.

Vivid colors and intricate designs have probably helped you decide to try a new brand or indulge in an unfamiliar style. Sure, the intense graphics are expected to catch your attention. Still, the relationship between art and craft beer is more than just an attractive image.

The Brewer's Association reports that

craft brewers accounted for \$29.3 billion of the 2019 beer industry. At the end of the year, there were 8,386 breweries counted in the United States, an increase of 8.9% from the previous year. To say there is an insane level of competition to attract consumers is an understatement.

## MARKETING TECHNIQUE

To stand apart, brewers turn to a marketing technique often called the “canvas on a can.” They hire in-house or freelance designers to tell a story upon their label.

Many companies are efficient in branding their offerings with outlandish characters, bold fonts and varieties of colors. Consumers are often drawn

to these cans or bottles and can quickly identify their favorite brands.

Brewing companies further their efforts by donning cherished logos on merchandise like clothing, draft glasses, sunglasses or bottle openers. Do your favorite team a favor by investing in their online shops or picking up their gear during your next visit.

## ARE ARTSY CANS HERE TO STAY?

Art and branding go hand in hand in the success of companies in nearly every industry. According to a study performed by Packaging of the World, 70% of consumers form their impression of a brand based solely on packaging. The popular beer magazine *Cana* said it best when they expressed that

“beer cans are officially the new record sleeve.”

While the taste of what is inside the can is ultimately the most important part of the craft beer experience, consumers are often enticed to give a brewery a chance based on the design alone.

The Brewer's Association's program director, Julia Herz, says, “a large percentage of beer lovers walk into a store and don't know what they're going to buy. The pressure at retail is to stand out and get noticed.”

The next time you're searching for a new beverage to try, make an effort to choose one on its label entirely. You may be surprised with the flavors inside.