



Scouting GABF 2015: Brian Yaeger previews the Northwest Region

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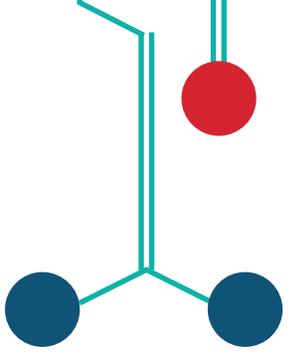
This is the fourth installment in this year's Scouting GABF 2015 series of previews of breweries pouring at the Great American Beer Festival, which opens Thursday, Sept. 24, in Denver. We've invited beer writers from across the country to weigh in on the GABF 2015 regions. We've also asked everyone to throw in a few wild cards – breweries from anywhere in the country they want to check out.

Brian Yaeger is the author of *Oregon Breweries*, a comprehensive guidebook to the breweries of Beervana. He lives in Portland, Ore., where he writes about beer for local and national publications and, along with his wife, runs Inn Beervana (bed'n'beer). You can follow him on Twitter @Yaeger.

Now, onto Brian's picks:

It's a funny thing about Oregon beer. People intuitively know there's a lot of good beer there, but beyond a small handful of brands with near-national distribution, most folks don't know who's making them. By all means explore beers from every region of the country, but give yourself ample time in the Northwest to discover why Oregon earned the nickname Beervana.





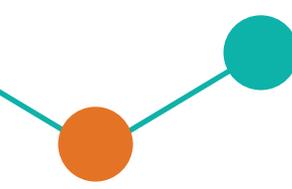
Barley Brown's Baker City

Ore. (Booths I-5 in Northwest and Y8 in Meet the Brewers)

That Barley Brown's is so far east it's almost in Idaho doesn't stop it from being one of Oregon's most decorated and beloved breweries and why it added a second production facility to keep up with demand. Of its 21 GABF medals, Shredders Wheat has won five years in a row so check that one out. Admittedly sexier is Pallet Jack IPA, which is only outshone by Fresh Hop Pallet Jack. Alas, that one won't be available at either of its booths but my money is on it to three-peat. As for the dark side, Turmoil basically created the modern day CDA/black IPA. It marries bodacious hops and roasted malts for dual bitterness from the citrus peel and unsweetened chocolate flavors. Meanwhile, for fans of barrel-aged beers, hit up the pourer for a taste of Heaven Hill-aged Don Vanuchi imperial stout. Having said all that, Ratchet Strap, a 7 percent IPA hopped with a winning triumvirate of Northwest Simcoe and Mosaic and German Hull Melon.

Pfriem Family Brewers Hood River

Ore. (Booth J10)



The brewery may only be 3 years old, but it's maturing nicely. Pfriem's affinity for Belgian and Northwest beer styles result in both a Blonde IPA and a Belgian Strong Blonde, but don't miss one of the first releases from its barrel room: Flanders Blonde. It's just as oaky and vinous as actual Flanders-style ales that come in red and brown, but the light color divulges the hints of grapes and apricots. Incidentally, there's a Pfriem Flanders Red, too, that leeches some character from the Pinot Noir barrels it ages in and is worth getting back in line for. For the full effect, visit the Pfriem family's brewery on the Columbia River in Hood River and enjoy their sometimes hoppy, alternately yeasty beers on the patio by the fire pit.

Ex Novo Brewing

Portland, Ore. (Booth I23)

Renowned as the world's first not-for-profit brewpub — that's right, the administrators pocket not one cent from this venture — what good would it be buying beer that felt more like giving to charity if said beer wasn't also enjoyable to drink? One offering that swept across Beervana this summer was The Most Interesting Lager in the World. Constructed on a base of Vienna and Pilsner malts with the requisite flaked corn, this Vienna-style lager is hopped with noble Saaz and pitched "Mexican" yeast. Makes for a great recalibrating sample on the floor. Then you're ready for Dynamic Duo, an imperial IPA featuring the wonder twins of Simcoe and Citra hops.



Or is it Cascade and Amarillo? Whichever version hits the floor of this doubly-rotating list of ace hops, it'll have you hearing BAM-THWAK. And if it wins a medal, founder Joel Gregory assures me they'll have a fundraiser auction for it...

Boneyard Brewing

Bend, Ore. (Booth I8)

Hops, hops, and way more hops. Boneyard's bringing them with five takes on hop-forward beers. In increasing order of IBUs (as outlined in parenthesis), there's Bone Light representing India session ales (20); Bone-a-fide for classic pale ale lovers (38); RPM IPA boasting 2.5 pounds of Northwest hops per barrel and is easily one of the most popular across the Pacific Northwest and the main driver behind building a second, larger brewhouse (50); Armored Fist which is an Imperial CDA or, fine, black IPA (80); and Notorious, its tears-of-joy inducing resinous, grapefruity Triple IPA (80). In the immortal words of Duran Duran, "Here's one you don't compromise... No, no, notorious." That's just how they do in the Central Oregon haven of Bend.

Breakside Brewing

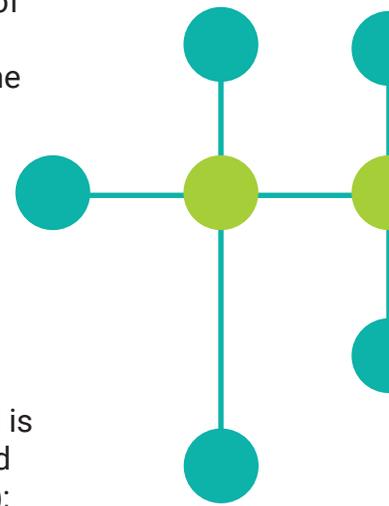
Portland, Ore./Milwaukie, Ore (Booth I9 & I10)

From the moment Breakside launched as a 4-barrel brewpub in north Portland, it made waves. Now that it operates a production facility in the southern suburb of Milwaukie, producing 20,000 barrels, it's making tsunamis. Famous for releasing 100 different beers a year, attendees can sample 10 percent. Many will beeline there for the 2014 gold medalist in American IPA, Breakside IPA, showcasing Citra and Chinook hops for a liquid tropical feast. Equally in demand is Passionfruit Sour Ale, a passion fruit driven Berliner Weisse, looking to reclaim its 2013 GABF medal status. Since people love trying off-the-wall beers and many of Breakside's recipes excel at that, savor your ounce of Birra Minestra, a delightfully tangy and refreshing beer made with Oregon basil, sungold tomatoes and pluots.

Old Town Brewing

Portland, Ore. (Booth J7)

Proof that Portland does more than just IPAs and IIPAs is the popularity of Cologne-style light, slightly fruity kolsch. Leading the charge is this pizzeria-turned-brewpub. Last year, Sun Dazed Kolsch medaled at both GABF and the World Beer Cup. Although the brewer that created it, Bolt Minister, has since departed to open his own brewery, Andrew Lamont expertly takes up the reins after helming Sam Adams' R&D brewery; his treatment of Sun



Dazed landed it at the top of the Portland-wide Craft Beer Challenge. Also vying to return to the GABF winner's podium is Old Town Fresh because, yeah, the only thing Portlanders love more than IPAs are fresh hopped IPAs. Oh, and java. You'll find both hops and Portland's Stumptown coffee beans in Bean Me Up, a coffee pale ale at an even-keeled 25 IBUs.

Yachats Brewing

Yachats, Ore. (Booth Z25)

This brand new brewery – an outcropping of the Yachats Farm Store on the central coast – is, obviously, making its GABF debut. But brewer Charlie Van Meter is no stranger to the main stage, having received a fist bump last year from Charlie Papazian while accepting silver honors for Logsdon Peche 'n Brett. American-style Brett beer is a coveted category and we can expect Van Meter to take what he gleaned at Logsdon Farmhouse Ales and bring that to Yachats. But until then, don't miss Coastal Dark Ale. All the dual bitterness of spicy hops and roasted malts of a Cascadian dark ale (Oh wait, you people call them "American-style Black Ale") but from the dark, rugged coast. Or lighten things up with Cetacea Szechuan Peppercorn Saison that, despite the use of peppercorns, remains a bright, floral saison.

And up across the Columbia in Washington...

Stoup Brewing

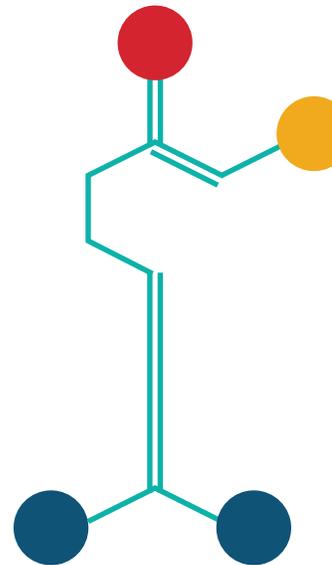
Seattle (Booth J30)

In Seattle's beer-hot Ballard neighborhood, Stoup is one of the breweries you just don't skip. And in true PNW fashion, it lets the hops do the talking. Crowd favorite Citra IPA conjures up tangelos and other orangey juices while Mosaic Pale Ale veers in a Caribbean fruit salad direction and both feel like vitamin C for your soul.

Sound Brewery

(Poulsbo, WA; booth X13)

Poulsbo is a small town across the bay from Seattle but the beers are huge on flavor. Monk's Indescretian is a 10 percent "Belgian Specialty" ale" and what makes it special is that it's got the spice-driven yeast character of a Belgian Strong Ale and the citrusy hop notes of an American DIPA. Going back for seconds is understandable.



Some of the myriad breweries I can't wait to check out:

Funky Buddha Brewery

Ft. Lauderdale (Booth W27)

For a state that emanates nothing but weird news stories, it's time we start hearing about the great beer coming out of Florida, too. And Funky Buddha excels at "weird," but weirdly delicious is more like it. Their Maple Bacon Coffee Porter is a thing of lore and No Crusts is the PB&J beer we never knew we wanted so much. Cheers to the Florida Man, or Florida men and women, who make these possible.

Strangeways Brewing

(Richmond, VA; H22)

It was Josh Bernstein's scouting of this brewery in this space last year that tipped me off to this Virginia outfit. Until such time as I find myself in its tasting room with 25 of its creations on tap, I look forward to trying Wake Me Up Before You Gose, that sounds as tasty as George Michael's hair looks. As for other light, tart German-style sour beers, its Berliner Weisses—fruited or not—are supposed to be crazy good.

Fate Brewing

Boulder (Booth W19)

I always like to make sure I explore what's going on in Colorado brewing and since an ounce here and there isn't enough, I'm taking myself to Boulder for a day. If that's not an option for everyone, I hear great things about this outfit that does both straight-up fundamentals like their GABF gold medal winning Laimas Kolsch as well as a tendency to play around with our second favorite brew, coffee, such as the Clotho Black IPA with coffee and chocolate.

