



## Holy Mountain is the beer grail of the moment in Seattle

The cult brewers can't keep up with demand, but you can try their ultra-small-run concoctions at the Interbay tap room.

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By: Tan Vinh

The hottest dinner ticket in Seattle next week is the Holy Mountain Brewery beer-pairing at the Masonry pizzeria on Queen Anne. That dinner sold out in under 10 minutes.

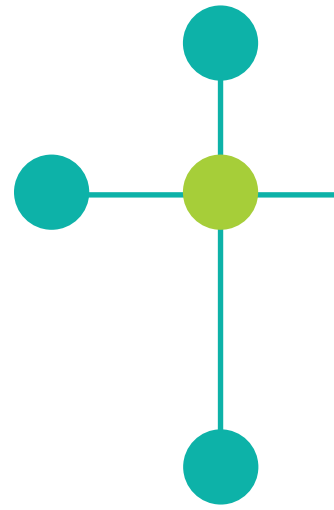
So did the beer-pairing dinner Holy Mountain held at both Tom Douglas' Brave Horse Tavern and Delancey.

And if you're thinking of buying a bottle of this cult beer, apparently a zillion people had the idea before you. The brewery sold out of its bottle releases, despite putting a cap on how many customers could buy at a time — to prevent hoarding.

These days, the demand for all things Holy Mountain is so high that the brewery can't accept any more bars who want to put its beer on tap. (The brewery is bringing in another 20-barrel tank to keep up with demand.)

You'll have to brave the traffic and hit its tap room in Interbay to sample all of its beers.





There are more than 300 breweries in the state, but there's only one Holy Mountain, which debuted last October, and since blew up through word-of-mouth. It's easily the best and most exciting craft brewery in Washington now.

Holy Mountain takes the most risks, brews the most challenging suds and boasts the most diverse beer lineup.

The three owners — Adam Paysse, Colin Lenfesty and Mike Murphy — are old hands, having worked in various jobs at Schooner Exact Brewing Co., Bainbridge Island Brewery and Westland Distillery.

They've been in this business long enough, they say, to know they didn't want to be beholden to any investors. The three beer geeks went it alone, borrowing money from friends and families so they could brew without the pressure of the bottom line.

That includes making some unbusinesslike decisions, like refusing to brew a flagship IPA, a standard Seattle beer that pays the bills for many breweries.

Holy Mountain believes IPAs are overdone. Instead, the brewers make lagers, a time-consuming and difficult beer to perfect because it's so hard to mask any defects occurring during brewing. Theirs is the best I've tasted in the state since Chuckanut Brewery's four years ago and — don't laugh — Gordon Biersch's lager at Pacific Place last year.

Their bitter beers go down easy. And their high-alcohol brews (9 percent) don't taste too boozy. Those are signs of great craftsmanship.

It's pointless to single out any of Holy Mountain's beers since its lineup changes frequently at its tap room. The brewery does only seasonal and one-offs.

Their yeast-forward beers — some have that barnyard funk you would find in European ciders — are an acquired taste, but their easy-drinking saisons and Belgian pale ales play more to the mainstream palate.

For IPA fans, there's the Kiln & Cone, a house pale ale that varies by each batch but has been consistent in delivering a big, hoppy punch with a smooth finish.



The Seattle area has been blessed with a few emerging stars in recent years such as Black Raven Brewing in Redmond, Reuben's Brews and Stoup Brewing in Ballard. Those are more the exception than the rule. These days, many bar owners and veteran brewers gripe that too many newcomers are garage-brewers who aren't ready for prime time or that they play it safe and make beers indistinguishable from one another.

In Holy Mountain, we have the buzz-worthy, game-changing newcomer that we've all been waiting for.

Holy Mountain Brewery, 1421 Elliott Ave. W. (Interbay); it's taproom opens 3-9 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, until 10 p.m. Friday, noon-10 p.m. Saturday and noon-9 p.m. Sunday. Closed Tuesday. Beers are \$2.50-\$6 ([blog.holymountainbrewing.com](http://blog.holymountainbrewing.com)).

