

Starved Rock Lodge

Craft Beers: Other Kinds Ale by Comparison

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When you read about the first inhabitants of Starved Rock State Park, you might think of an ancient people from the Hopewellian and Woodland tribes. While Native Americans were chasing buffalo and taming the prairies of Illinois, Mesopotamians were domesticating grains. All of this happened around 8000 B.C. By 3,500 B.C., parts of the world were brewing beer. It was the most popular alcoholic beverage in Mesopotamia. Beer idioms became part of language and the government took to taxing beer consumption – something governments worldwide have been doing ever since.

Fast forward to 2011, where sales of the Starved Rock Signature Ale have tripled during the past four years. What makes this special craft brew so special?

“It’s brewed by the Jacob Leinenkugel Brewing Company, and the fresh draft pour makes it a truly great-tasting beer,” says Andrea Yeruski, food and beverage manager at Starved Rock Lodge. “We added Signature Ale five years ago. We put our stamp on it, but it’s made by Leinenkugel. The smooth-tasting ale remains a one-of-a-kind product because you can’t buy it in a six-pack at any store; it’s only available at Starved Rock Lodge.”

When asked to describe this special craft brew, John Leinenkugel, trade brewer for the Wisconsin-based brewery, says, “We’ve been brewing our custom ale, in our ‘Leinie 10th Street Brewery’ just north of downtown Milwaukee, since 1998. It’s our one and only true ale beer. It’s a cross between an English-style amber ale and a pale ale. We’re honored that a great partner like Starved Rock Lodge is proud to serve it to its guests.”

Brides and grooms seek out the unique ale, too. The lodge hosted more than 125 weddings this year, and many guests requested the Starved Rock Signature Ale for their wedding receptions. “Eighty to 90 percent choose Starved Rock Signature Ale because they want to offer their guests something that’s unique to this destination,” says Jill Jacobs, sales manager at the lodge. Guests request on-tap craft beer more than anything else, when they visit the bar at the Lodge’s Back Door Lounge. Nationally, sales of craft beers were up 11 percent in 2010, even though the overall beer market was down 1 percent. About two-thirds of U.S. adults drink alcohol, and most drink beer, according to a recent Gallup poll on alcohol consumption.

The 4th Annual Leinenkugel Dinner is planned for Nov. 11, in the Great Hall of Starved Rock Lodge. “Every item on the menu is made with Leinie Beer and the blessing of the Leinenkugel brewery – even dessert,” says Barry Brooks, executive chef.

Tastings of seasonal Leinenkugel beers will be available. Try “Honey Bear,” which blends Honey Wheat with Berry Weiss, or “Red Sunset,” which blends Sunset Wheat with Red Lager.



John Leinenkugel pours a sample of his family's custom craft beer, at Starved Rock Lodge.

Craft Beer Brewers are ...

Small: Annual production is 6 million barrels of beer or less.

Independent: Less than 25 percent of the craft brewery is owned or controlled by an alcoholic beverage industry member who is not a craft brewer.

Innovative: Craft brewers interpret historic styles and then add their own unique twists.

Traditional: Their beers are usually made with ingredients like malted barley.

Nearby: The majority of Americans live within 10 miles of a craft beer brewer.

Connected: They tend to have unique ways of interacting with their communities.

Employers: About 100,000 people work for craft brewers.

The evening also features a very special guest speaker from the Leinenkugel family. Throughout the evening, guests will have chances to win Leinenkugel products and even a grand prize. Tickets are \$45 per person and are available by calling the Lodge at (815) 220-7386. The fun continues on Saturday, Nov. 12, with a Leinie Pub Crawl in downtown Utica, Ill., ending at the Back Door Lounge, where door prizes and live music are on hand. For more information on Starved Rock Lodge, go to starvedrock-lodge.com. ■