

# ART & CULTURE

## The Art of the Brew

by Jeanna Goodrich

"I definitely had a few beers in college," Dodging Duck owner Keith Moore laughed, taking a sip from a bitter, hint-of-grapefruit IPA. As the brewmaster of Boerne's favorite local brewery, Moore is living a beer-lover's dream. After spending years and years of his life in the brewing industry, Moore settled with his wife and children in Boerne, looking for a different brewing adventure.

"I wasn't one of those guys that started in home-brewing or had always dreamed of being a brewer," Moore said, "but I have been involved in the brewing industry for over 25 years now. About ten years ago, my wife and family and I moved back here to Texas. I had been working for a Swiss company and living in Switzerland, working within the brewing industry. We got back here and decided that it would be a great spot to have a restaurant and brewery."

Upon moving to Boerne, Moore felt that a local brew-pub with a relaxed, welcoming environment was just what the community needed. During the process of transforming the location into a brewery and restaurant, Moore would sometimes sit and watch the ducks in the creek across the road. "While we were working, we would constantly hear the screeching of tires and look out the window to see a duck just barely making it across the road," he said. It seemed only natural, then, to honor the brave

birds with the name of his restaurant, The Dodging Duck.

Even the ducks themselves have come to the brewery for some relaxing respite. "For several years in a row, there was a duck hen that laid her eggs in our flower bed in the front, and we'd get little babies every year," Moore laughed. "When they were old enough, we would help carry them across the street. There were quite a number of scenes where our servers had ducks in their hands or held up in their t-shirts, and I was out there stopping traffic to let the ducks across."

Between helping ducks to the creek and serving some of the best home-cooked meals around, Moore had to find the time to keep his brew kettles full. "When we opened the restaurant, I actually had a brewer working for me," Moore said. "When he left, I started getting phone calls and emails and letters from people, not applying to be the brewer but rather volunteering to be the brewer. All of them said, 'Can I please come be your brewer? You don't even have to pay me to do it!' And that's what made me think, well maybe this is fun, maybe I can do this, and before I say yes to someone else maybe I should try it myself and see if I like it."

"I'd been working with the brewer that worked for me for about four years, and I'd been involved in the brewing process, so I knew enough about it to pick it up and do it," he con-

tinued. "I got a lot of support from other brewers; the fraternity of brewers is really close, and everyone is happy to help. In the beginning, it was super challenging just to figure out what to do, but as time has gone by—and I've been doing it for over three years by myself—I have found it to be a joy to do. It's always fun to look for something to do a little different, a little better, and have fun tweaking the recipes."

For almost ten years, the Dodging Duck has produced about 15-20 different beers per year, with more than 30 varieties under its belt. "The brewing is a lot of fun, a real joy, and I almost feel like I have a hobby out there rather than a job brewing the beer," Moore said with a smile. "I'm sure it's very different from being a brewer in a huge brewery, where they are trying to have absolute consistency. I'm not really interested in consistency at all. I change my recipes just about every time, even if I brew the same kind of beer. I change styles all the time."

With countless varieties in barley, hops, yeast, and other extras, Moore notes that brewing takes just as much creativity as any other art. "There are probably 40 or 50 generally acknowledged styles of beer, but there's nothing that says you have to make a beer that exactly matches a style. Each one of them is different in the grains that you use. Most of my beers are either 100% malted barley beers, or sometimes I add wheat, oats, rye, or different grains."

"Even within the malted barley," Moore continued, more in-depth, "there is a huge variety of beer made different by how much the grain is roasted, or what variety of barley is used. The color of beer is generally going to come from the malted barley that you use, either one that's not roasted at all, to the darkest grains that are roasted right up to the point of catching on fire."

Often compared to roasting coffee beans, the barley roast has a huge impact on the beer's true flavor. "It's not just different colors you get from roasting it," Moore added, "but it changes the chemical composition of the barley, and you get remarkably different flavors out of the grains that are roasted to different levels. You can almost make an infinite variety of beers just by changing the grains that you use."

After the barley has been chosen and brewed, adding the hops is another creative step. "There is a huge variety of hops you can use," Moore said. "Not only does it matter which ones you choose, but when you add them to the product, anywhere from when the liquid first starts coming in to the brew kettle, to different times during the boil, even adding them after the boil as late as in the serving tank—what they call 'dry-hopping'. To top that off, there is a huge variety of yeast strains, and all sorts of other things I'm having fun with adding to the beer."

From orange zest to pecans to pumpkin—one of Moore's personal favorites—some of the best parts about brewing is being able to make his beer truly his own. "One of my customers has been pushing me for a long time to make a chile beer—and I think I'm going to try it!" Moore said.

"I recently made a Belgian-style Pale Ale, and I zested 72 oranges to make it," Moore continued. "Belgians use a lot of orange zest in their beer, and not only does it add an orange flavor, but it has an interesting effect on the body of the beer. It's kind of magical stuff. It was really fun, and I'm definitely going to use orange zest again... though I don't know that I'll use 72 oranges again. I found a zester that worked great with the oranges, but it also worked pretty great on my knuckles, so I think I'll use a few less oranges next time!"

Even if you're not a fan of oranges or pumpkins or chile, there is still a beer or two for you at the Dodging Duck. "I can't make a single beer that is everybody's favorite, which is why I have four taps on at any given time with a range of styles for everyone," Moore said. "I try to have something fairly light, something really dark, something really bitter, and something in-between and fun. Hopefully, anyone that walks in here that likes beer at all will find something that they enjoy drinking."

"I make an India Pale Ale (IPA) and an Extra Special Bitters (ESB)," Moore added, for those who can enjoy the bitter side of beers, "and I always try to have one of those on tap. There is a segment of beer drinkers that call themselves 'hop heads' who just have to have a bitter beer."

Just as wide as the range of beer is the range of people who travel from all over to visit our local brewery. From Florida to Montana to Ontario, Canada, the Dodging Duck has visitors that make it a point to stop and enjoy the current tap selections. "I have an e-mail list of people who have been to the brewery with folks from England, Canada, Arizona, Louisiana, and many other places. There are people who make it a point to visit the local brewery, and we get a lot of positive feedback from many of them. It's really a fun thing to be the local brewery, because we get so many folks from so many different places."

Enjoyed by people from all over the world, it only seems fitting that Moore's beers have been given numerous delicious-brew awards. "When we started out, we thought that it would be nice to get some credentials," he explained. "We entered beer in the World Beer Championships in Chicago, and companies around the world submit their beer, wine, or spirits for testing. We've won three gold medals, three silvers, and several bronze medals with beers compared to some pretty large companies."

Moore added, "I have my sights set on entering the Great American Beer Festival in Denver someday... we'll see!" X

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