

Brewery scene booming in Bellingham

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By John Hopperstad

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Bellingham is a great place to visit with easy access to mountains and the water. And beer?

In just the last few years, there has been an explosion of breweries popping up in Bellingham, and many of them are now international award winners.

“We started in the basement of a Bellingham home, just as friends, homebrewing,” said Jack Lamb, owner of Aslan Brewing, now in its fourth year.

The basement is a lot bigger now. Aslan Brewing is in a large building downtown that also houses a restaurant. And it is cranking out beer not just for locals and visitors, but for people around the northwest, one six-pack at a time.

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“Brewingham is what this area is often referred to because this is the central driving force of local small business,” said Lamb.

Janet Lightner, co-owner of nearby Boundary Brewing is seeing a lot more tourists coming to town in search of local brew.

“The cat is out of the bag,” said Lightner. “This is how beer tastes when it’s made well.”

There are now more than a dozen breweries around Bellingham, most opening up in the last four years.

The brewers credit their success to an already great beer culture in Bellingham, but the awards don’t hurt. If you walk into most pubs you’ll find hanging medals, and awards on the wall.

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Just in the first six months of this year, local breweries won 44 medals from brewing competitions around the world.

Award-winning brewery in Bellingham

“When we do get these awards, people tend to notice and they feel proud of their community,” said Mari Kemper with Chuckanut Brewery.

It's no accident that the beer in Bellingham is so good. Instead of cut throat competition, the brewers in town boost each other up, work together, and share ideas.

"We actually help each other out," said Lightner. "We all kind of have that high tide raising all the boats kind of mentality."

It is unique, and in Bellingham, among this award winning beer culture, it seems to be working.

Jack Lamb wants to see more breweries open and really make Bellingham a mecca for good beer.

"I think there could be a brewery on every corner of every neighborhood and they'd all be successful."

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