



PARISH BREWING  
 GHOST IN THE MACHINE BY PARISH BREWING COMPANY IS A REGIONAL BREW AVAILABLE CURRENTLY IN LOUISIANA, MISSISSIPPI, AND ALABAMA, AND SOON IN TEXAS AND FLORIDA.

## It's All Craft to Me

BY BETH DEMMON

If all beer is craft beer, how much do customers care?

**CUSTOMERS WANT CRAFT BEER.** About 40 percent of the of-age population are now craft beer drinkers, according to the Brewers Association. About 5 million new craft drinkers are added to that population each year. But locking down local brews can take extra legwork compared to national brands designed to please all palates.

Coty Bell, brewmaster at Twin Peaks Restaurants in Dallas says local counts for a lot at the brand's 80-plus restaurants. "Customers tend to order local above all else, then trickle down to the regional and national beer brands," Bell says.

Andy Husbands, the chef/owner and resident pitmaster of The Smoke Shop, which has three locations in Massachusetts, says this is true to a point. "We have guests who want to branch out and experiment [and] those who are excited to come across a hard-to-find beer on draft. We also have plenty of guests who stand by a national brand."

Age, not income, seems to be the biggest indicator of beer-ordering habits. Millennials and Generation Xers make up the vast majority of craft beer drinkers, while older generations lean heavily toward the tried-and-true macro beers.

In areas saturated with craft beer options, like San Diego or Denver, local beers dominate drink menus by sheer availability. However, in regions like the Midwest, regional and national beer brands still enjoy a stronghold.

The determining factor still isn't cost. It's novelty. "Customers are more concerned with the newness and availability of a hot product versus whether it's a local or national brand," says Lacey Lauderdale, beverage manager at Walk-On's Enterprises in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

A key metric many beer connois-



SIPS APPEAL

Founders Brewing's Azacca IPA

"I haven't had a beer from Founders Brewing Company that I didn't like," says Scott Jones of The Shannon Rose Irish Pubs. Meant to highlight the Azacca hop, which is full of citrus and tropical tones, this beer gets a huge dose at the end of fermentation to boost aromatics. The resulting IPA, which is only available only from December to March, pairs well with spicy dishes.

GRAND RAPIDS MICHIGAN

seurs look for is freshness, which is majorly affected by distribution availability. "Most of our guests always ask what we have that is new on tap from local breweries before they make their decision on what they are drinking," says Scott Jones, beer specialist for The Shannon Rose Irish Pub's two locations in New Jersey. "Our guests tend to associate local breweries with being fresh and innovative. We will get barrels from local breweries that keg their beer and deliver it to us the next day. You can't get any fresher than that."

The trade off to macro beer is consistency.

People who prefer beers that are available nationwide expect the same experience no matter where they are. Thus, offering a selection of rotating local and seasonal beers alongside national brands is crucial for full-service restaurants like Bennigan's, says Angela Discher, vice president of marketing for Bennigan's parent company Legendary Restaurant Brands. "While we see an increase in craft and independent, the domestic and national brands still represent the lion's share of our beer sales. It's important to have a healthy balance that drives top-line sales." ■

Restaurant Recommended

Lacey Lauderdale at Walk-On's, Scott Jones of The Shannon Rose Irish Pubs, and Angela Discher at Legendary Restaurant Brands share local, regional, and national favorites.

LOCAL

Crunch Granola DIPA

"In New Jersey, Magnify Brewing Company has a cult following. They are pushing the limits when it comes to IPAs."

-JONES

REGIONAL

Ghost in the Machine Double IPA

"First and foremost, [breweries we'll work with] must have a good liquid that has stroke. Secondly, distribution and activation is key. Parish Brewing Company has all of the above."

-LAUDERDALE

NATIONAL

Stella Artois

"Yuengling and Stella Artois are in most of our restaurants. They have a huge fan base."

-DISCHER

REGIONAL:  
BELL'S TWO HEARTED  
AMERICAN ALE



REGIONAL:  
DESCHUTES  
FRESH  
SQUEEZED IPA



NATIONAL:  
SAM ADAMS  
OCTOBERFEST



NATIONAL:  
STELLA  
ARTOIS

