

Orange Bike honors tradition while breaking new ground with its gluten-free beers

pressherald.com/2024/11/25/orange-bike-honors-tradition-while-breaking-new-ground-with-its-gluten-free-beers

November 25, 2024



The pilsner, West Coast pale ale and winter lager from gluten-free Orange Bike Brewing in Portland.
Photo by Ben Lisle

Orange Bike Brewing Co. recently celebrated its first anniversary. And what a debut year it has been, winning two medals at the 2024 Great American Beer Festival: a silver for its Oktoberfest and a bronze for its flagship pilsner in the gluten-free beer category.

The brewery is burrowed into the heart of East Bayside's industrial zone (down not one, but two alleys), amid a visually chaotic and unpretentious landscape of pavement, block walls, metal siding and the scruffy accents of liminal spaces – dumpsters, discarded pallets and weedy lots scattered with cars and trailers. The setting's charming disarray, marked by the sounds of cars fizzing over the interstate nearby and the perfume of roasting coffee, provides a counterpoint to the brewery's tidy and polished interior, criss-crossed with shards of natural light.

Flanking the tasting room is the brewhouse, visible through glass panes. Therein lies a classic Peter Austin brewing system – the same sort that brewed Maine’s first craft beers at D.L. Geary Brewing Company in the mid-1980s. Austin was a legendary British brewer whose protégé, Alan Pugsley, would join Geary as brewmaster. Pugsley’s influence on craft beer in Maine and beyond – as a brewer and a consultant – has been profound, from Geary’s and Shipyard to, more recently, Rupee. Working with head brewer, Jason Kissinger, Pugsley helped craft recipes for Orange Bike’s gluten-free beers.

Thus, as Orange Bike explores one of the new frontiers of craft beer, it also has its roots in Maine’s brewing tradition. As Mark Twain (presumably) said, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it often rhymes.”



Every Thursday Press Herald's Leslie Bridgers breaks down the goings-on at City Hall and gives you a look into the reporting that brings you the news of the city.

You don’t need me to tell you that this is excellent gluten-free beer, given the brewery’s rookie flex at the Great American Beer Festival. But I can confirm that they are delightful simply as beers, with the alternative grains providing plenty of body and an ample platform for the hops.

PILSNER

ABV: 5%

Notes: Brewed with millet malt, buckwheat malt and rice. Straw-colored. Aromas of apple, white grapes, and sweet graininess. A fruity, medium body is slightly sweet, followed by a dry, nicely bitter finish.

WEST COAST PALE ALE

ABV: 5.5%

Notes: Brewed with millet malt, rice malt and buckwheat malt. Pours a medium amber. Pine, grapefruit and sweet citrus on the nose. Medium bodied, it ends with a balance of piney bitterness and malty sweetness.

WINTER LAGER

ABV: 6%

Notes: Brewed with millet malt, buckwheat malt and quinoa. Ruby brown, smelling of chocolate and bread crust. Medium-bodied. Flavors of coffee and dried fruit give way to a moderately bitter finish (with a touch of lingering sweetness).

Ben Lisle is an assistant professor of American Studies at Colby College. He lives among the breweries in Portland's East Bayside, where he writes about cultural history, urban geography, and craft beer culture.

filed under:

Three Cheers

At Cheese Louise, you can get your grilled cheese stuffed with Thanksgiving dinner

Throwback photo: Falmouth Foreside family prepares for Thanksgiving in 1954

© 2025