

Third Coast Digest

Milwaukee Brewing Company: Ready with a new image

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By Brian Jacobson

Milwaukee Brewing Company started with two kettles at the Milwaukee Ale House and now encompasses a Grafton location as well as a full brewhouse and bottling facility in the Fifth Ward.

This Sunday, Milwaukee Brewing Company will roll out a re-branding along with a full line of beers during a kick-off at Turner Hall called #luvMKEflavor. Six different flavors and styles will be offered and paired with food from various restaurants in the city for this four-hour event.



To mark this evolutionary step for the nearly 15-year-old brand, we took one of the Friday evening tours at the brewing facility on South 2nd Street. Upon entering the cavernous space, a small gang of brewmasters hang around a small bar underneath a gigantic ceiling fan in the middle of the warehouse. They are sipping on special efforts as well as drafts from the ABV (Attitude by Volume line) collection such as the Rishi Tea-infused “Godzilla” beer. Co-founder and owner Jim McCabe hangs out with his crew, laughing as many employees are glued to their smartphones, checking in on a kind of foursquare for beer lovers called Untappd.



We join the other tour-goers preparing to follow the guide by indulging in a “Louie’s Demise” or a “Hop Happy” draft. (Warning to future tour-goers: The Hop Happy IPA malt is 7.5 percent alcohol by volume and “high gravity.” In other words, don’t go on an empty stomach). All beers in the line-up are flavorful and powerful, from the Pull Chain Pale Ale to the Polish Moon Milk Stout (a very dark beer infused with milk sugars that make it very sweet). The beer is topped off with a few turns from an old wooden pepper grinder filled with hops.

The tour itself begins with a bit of history and an entertaining video containing interviews with the colorful characters that work there. In the meantime, our tour guide Tom uses a coffee grinder to mulch up mash malt ingredients which are then placed in a crock pot to make a kind of tea. We see that in addition to the bottles, MKE Brewing has added a special kind of canning process to its lineup of containers. Later on, Tom will proudly show off the innovative 4-pack plastic tops

for the cans, which are environmentally-friendly and useful in design. Milwaukee Brewing Company utilizes many 21st-century techniques in both brewing and packaging, including running the facility a few days a week on a biofuel made from the used cooking oil of local restaurants.

The equipment is a kind of mish-mosh of shiny new and tried and true. Tom exclaims at one point: “that machine we got from the Jones family, you know, the Partridge Family? Yes! They used to make beer and it came up for sale and we have it now. Shirley Jones used to make beer with that! That’s so cool!”



And so it goes, as I peer tipsily into a giant empty kettle hoping not to go in headfirst.

Luckily TCD’s newest photography intern Benjamin Wick was around to steady me in-between shots. His slideshow from Friday’s tour completes our intimate portrait of Milwaukee Brewing Company.

Tickets are still available for the Sunday event, where you can groove to the sounds of 88.9 Radio Milwaukee. There you will see the new industrial look that Translator Digital Cafe has given the now year-round beers, which include QR codes to the website, social network platforms and videos.

You can also partake in the \$7 Friday and Saturday brewery tours, in which you walk away with foggy memories and a souvenir glass.