

Beer Bros: Local Breweries take top honors at the nation's biggest Beer Fest, and other hoppy happenins'



The El Segundo Brewing Company crew shows that they're not a one-trick IPA pony, winning gold with its Costa Azul Mexican Lager at the prestigious Great American Beer Festival. Photo courtesy ESBC

By Ed Solt

Craft Beer culture's most prestigious and largest competition in the world, the Great American Beer Festival, congregated at the Colorado Convention Center in Denver from October 5 to 9 with a record 7,227 competition entries. The GABF's judging panel of 264 beer experts from 12 countries award gold, silver, and bronze medals in 96 beer categories, covering the full gamut of 161 different beer styles. The festival brings forth all facets of craft beer culture, with tastings, food pairings, home brewing seminars, and industry lectures. "It's exhausting and pretty intense. There are so many events and things to do. It's a pilgrimage for all who are into craft beer, our craft beer mecca," said **El Segundo Brewing Company** president and founder Rob Croxall. "The GABF is just half the story.

Every store, restaurant, bar, and brewery in the surrounding area have something going on.”

El Segundo Brewery won gold in the competitive category of American-Style Amber/Dark Lager with their Casa Azul Mexican Lager.

“We first started brewing Costa Azul three years ago — it was one of the first recipes from seven to eight years ago,” he said. “We put a restraint on the hops, putting the Mexican Lager yeast character center stage to shine.”

ESBC is most noted for their diverse array of West Coast IPAs, such as Mayberry IPA, Hoptanker, Hammerland, and Powerplant, all named after cultural elements of El Segundo.

“Being primarily an IPA brewery, I’m beyond stoked on winning in this category,” Croxall said. “I’ve been really happy with Casa Azul over the years but am still in disbelief at how well it did.”

But don’t fret. In continuing the ESBC IPA tradition, The 105 “Bursting” IPA recently hit the beer scene. ESBC’s newest beer uses a brand new hop called “Idaho 7.” With an essence of fruit and citrus flavors, it’s a part of the new wave of tropical hop flavors. In November, ESBC will be releasing a Nelson Sauvin Hop IPA as a part of their “Year of Day One: Tanks to Taste Buds in 12 hours” promotion. “The Nelson Sauvin Hop is used in Sauvignon Blanc white wine,” Croxall said. “We’re calling it the ‘HaHa’ after the Simpsons character Nelson, who makes that taunting catchphrase.”

Also taking home honors, **Smog City Brewing** won bronze for its Sabre-Toothed Squirrel, an American Hoppy Amber in the American-Style Amber/Red Ale. A signature brew for SCB, it’s offered year-round at the brewery’s Torrance tasting room (1901 Del Amo Blvd. B, Torrance) and at bottle stores everywhere.

Hoppy happenins’

Bill Baker of **Zymurgy Brew Works and Tasting Room** in Torrance invites everybody to come by and brew a batch for the holidays (22755 Hawthorne Blvd., Torrance).

“Just say Bill sent you and got 20 percent off,” Baker said, “We invite companies to come brew as a team brewing experience. Your beer will be ready to share for the Holiday Party season.”

King Harbor Brewing Company is in the last week of its “Hop-tober,” a month dedicated to radical amazing hoppy beers. Next up is a release of the Skull Cleaver Fresh Hop IPA with Mosaic hops on October 27th.

“Look, this beer shouldn’t exist. It took a full 15bbl mash ton to make 5bbls of finished beer. There are over 20lbs/bbl of just fresh hops,” said KHBC Tom Dunbabin. “It’s going to rip your head off.”



King Harbor Brewing Company's Brewmaster Phil McDaniel posted up at the GABF booth with Jeremy Duncan from San Diego's Mother Earth Brewing. Photo courtesy KHBC

On the 29th, KHBC will be “washing it all down” with a Halloween celebration of all seven of the new hoppy creations on tap at its brewery. Playing a Misfits cover set will be South Bay rockabilly band The Thirsty Crows (2907 182nd Street, Redondo Beach).

Phantom Carriage Brewery, our favorite horror themed brewery in Carson, is releasing “Lugosi” on October 29th as a part of its Halloween celebration. Lugosi is a high gravity dark wild sour ale aged in oak with Brettanomyces, Lactobacillus, and Pediococcus featuring high-proof sweet cherry, vanilla, and stone fruit. [12.2% ABV]. Keeping on the theme, PCB will be screening Universal's “Dracula” (1931) outdoors on a large screen. Indoors will feature film music scores from the 1970s and 80s. Limited t-shirts and glassware, as well as “devilish” food, will be provided. For tickets go to PhantomCarriage.com (18525 S Main St., Gardena).

Joe is possessed again at **Absolution Brewing Company**. Back on tap by popular demand at the ABC tasting room (2878 Columbia St., Torrance) is the “Possessed Joe,” a coffee porter that is a complex array of nuts, chocolate, toffee, and caramel tastes, with a smooth hint of vanilla (ABV: 5.4% IBU).

Redondo Beach Riviera Village’s, **Select Beer Store** is ending October with a hemorrhaging of hops. On October 27, SBS is throwing a night with Cooperstown, New York, **Brewery Ommegang** and its Belgian-style ales and Kansas City’s **Boulevard Brewing Company**, featuring food from Barley Hops Grill. With Halloween taking place on Monday this year, many are celebrating all Hallows’ Eve on Saturday, October 29th. Be that person two days before Halloween! SBS is rewarding \$1 off beers to patrons wearing costumes. Michel & Lydian, owners of **Jopen Bier** from Haarlem Netherland will be at SBS on Saturday, November 5th to discuss and answer questions revolving around their traditional Haarlem styled beers. Queso Beso is curating the cheese. 1613 S Pacific Coast Hwy, Redondo Beach.

South Bay’s OG Brewery, **Strand Brewing Company**, is in preparation for its 7th Anniversary BBQ and Beer Party taking place November 11 through 13. SBC is serving special casks and beers and music will be playing all weekend long. No ticket necessary. All are welcomed for this family fun event (2201 Dominguez St., Torrance).

It is a **Naja’s** Halloween tradition that at least one person dresses as Naja’s Bar Manager general manager Jay Ousten. It’s a simple costume. All it takes is a fake beard, Lakers hat, a stuffed beer industry workshirt to capture Ousten’s barrel chest...errr, belly, and a laugh heard from the crow’s nest at Old Tony’s. Naja’s is throwing its annual Horror Night Halloween Party on Saturday, October 29. Prizes for the top three costumes. Local Band Four Fingers will be banging the ghoulish sounds all night long (54 International Boardwalk, Redondo Beach).

*To contribute to the brew of local craft beer culture, email
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