

Breweries, Microbreweries, and Brewpubs

by
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Prior to Prohibition, there were thousands of breweries in the United States, mostly brewing heavier beers than modern US beer drinkers are used to. Beginning in 1920, most of these breweries went out of business, although some converted to soft drinks and other businesses. Bootlegged beer was often watered down to increase profits, beginning a trend, still on-going today, of the American markets heavily advertising the weaker beers and keeping them popular. Consolidation of breweries and the application of industrial quality control standards have led to the mass-production and the mass-marketing of huge quantities of light lagers. Advertising became supreme, and bigger companies fared better in that market. The decades after World War II saw a huge consolidation of the American brewing industry: brewing companies would buy their rivals solely for their customers and distribution systems, shutting down their brewing operations.

Despite the record increases in production between 1870 and 1895, the number of firms fell by 46%. Average brewery output rose significantly, driven partly by a rapid increase in output by the largest breweries. As late as 1877, only four breweries topped 100,000 barrels annually. By 1895, the largest sixteen firms had greatly increased their productive capacity and were all brewing over 250,000 barrels annually; and imports have become more abundant since the mid-1980s. The number of breweries has been claimed as being either over 1,500 in 2007 or over 1,400 in 2010, depending on the source. As of June 2013, The Brewers Association reports the total number of currently operating US breweries to be 2,538, with only 55 of those being non-craft breweries.

The term "microbrewery" originated in the UK in the late 1970s to describe the new generation of small breweries that focused on producing traditional cask ale independently of major brewers or pub chains. In 1972, Martin Sykes established Selby Brewery as the first new independent brewing company for 50 years. "I foresaw the revival in real ale, and got in early", he said. Another early example was the Litchborough Brewery founded by Bill Urquhart in 1974. Alongside commercial brewing, training

courses and apprenticeships were offered by Litchborough, with many of the UK movement's early pioneers passing through its courses prior to setting up their own breweries.

In the US, homebrewer K. Florian Klemp wrote in 2008 that the craft beer movement was revived in 1965—subsequent to an earlier American era—when Fritz Maytag acquired the Anchor Brewing Company in San Francisco, thereby saving it from closure. American craft beer drinkers tend to have higher average incomes and demographically skew white, male, and generation X; however trends show an increasingly racially and ethnically diverse, female, and millennial demographic profile.

The turnaround of the Anchor Brewing Company in 1965, after it was acquired by Maytag, is considered a turning point for American beer, due to the revival of craft beer in the US, where microbrewing boomed after then-president Jimmy Carter de-regulated the beer market in 1979. During the same period, others turned to homebrewing and eventually a few of these brewers started to produce on a slightly larger scale. For inspiration, they turned to the centuries-old tradition of artisan beer and cask ale production that was continuing in the UK, Germany and Belgium.

American microbreweries typically distribute through a wholesaler in a traditional three-tier system, others act as their own distributor (wholesaler) and sell to retailers or directly to the consumer through a tap room, attached restaurant, or off-premises sales. Because alcohol control is left up to the states, there are many state-to-state differences in the laws. Following the federal US government shutdown on October 1, 2013, craft beer producers were forced into an activity lull due to the closure of the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB), an arm of the Treasury Department. The TTB is responsible for granting approval for new breweries, recipes, and labels. Interest spread to the US, and in 1982, Grant's Brewery Pub in Yakima, Washington was opened, reviving the US "brewery taverns" of well-known early Americans as William Penn, Samuel Adams and Patrick Henry. Growth was initially slow—the fifth US brewpub (BridgePort Brewing Company in Portland, Oregon) opened in 1984, Triple Rock in 1986, but the growth since then has been considerable: the Brewers Association reports that in 2012 there were 2,075 regional craft breweries, microbreweries and brewpubs in the US.

Craft brewing is most established in the US, where changes to US law laid the foundations for the expansion of craft brewing. The 1978 Carter home brewing law allowed for small amounts of beer and wine, and, in 1979, Carter signed a bill to deregulate the brewing industry, making it easier to start new breweries; although, states could still enact local restrictions. As a result of deregulation, home brewing became a popular hobby in the 1980s and 1990s, and, in the mid-1990s, home brewers launched business ventures based on home-based hobby brewing.

A brew pub is an establishment selling beer brewed on the premises and often including a restaurant. The Brewers Association defines American craft brewers as "small, independent and traditional": "small" is defined as an "annual production of 6 million barrels of beer or less"; "independent" is defined as at least 75% owned or controlled by a craft brewer; and "traditional" is defined as brewing in which at least 50% of the beer's volume consists of "traditional or innovative" ingredients. This definition includes older microbreweries, which traditionally produce small quantities of beer, as well as other breweries of various sizes and specialties. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Craft_brewery_and_microbrewery]

Since Microbreweries and brewpubs are a fairly recent innovation, you won't find front-stickers on those covers, only the older brewery covers. Steve Weiner, NJ, had 750 different Brew Pub covers as of June 2000, and Loren Moore, CA, had 627 Breweries as of December 2020. I keep my brew pubs and microbreweries as one category, and I normally keep my brewery covers with my Beer covers.

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