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Draw on University Ave., says Shiner is more of a "niche" brand, but very popular.

"Duddley's was the first place (in town) to put Shiner on tap," says Benning. "And, we do real well with it."

With Austin as one of Shiner's biggest distributors, there has been some controversy over the brewery's decision to stop making returnable bottles. A few Austin retailers have threatened to boycott the beer because of ecological concerns.

Rose Wilson, a spokesman from the San Antonio office, says the company has stopped using returnable bottles, but only because consumers have been reluctant to return the bottles.

"Not only has there been a lack of support," says Wilson, "but, by using returnable bottles, the brewery uses a lot more water in the cleaning process and caustic materials in removing labels."

Wilson says the brewery does use recyclable bottles.

Originally founded by the Shiner Brewing Association, a combination of Germans and Czechoslovakian farmers and merchants, the first brewery was a two-story tin building built by Shiner citizens in 1909.

Unfortunately, the founders weren't too familiar with the proper methods of brewing beer. After several barrels of sour beer and near bankruptcy, they sold the brewery to Kosmos Spoetzl in 1915.

Spoetzl a Bavarian brewmaster, page 8

brought his "natural old world brewing recipe" to Shiner from Cairo, where he had mastered the art of good beer-making. This natural formula had been in the family for generations.

After 50 years of ownership by the Spoetzl family, the brewery was bought by private stockholders, but retains the "Spoetzl" title.

Now owned by Carlos Alvarez, president of Gambrinus Importing Co., the brewery will undergo some remodeling changes.

Wilson says the bottle itself has changed as well.

"Labels and bottle shape were changed a couple of months ago, just to upgrade the style," Wilson says.

Gambrinus Importing Co. also handles the sales and marketing for Corona Beer.

Despite the brewery's success, the atmosphere remains simple and relaxed. A mural in the hospitality room stretches over the bar, displaying the faces of past employees and old-time Shiner. Located outside the brewery is the gift shop and museum. The wooden cabin offers all kinds of Shiner beer paraphernalia, as well as an impressive collection of antiques.

Located about two hours outside of College Station, free tours of the K. Spoetzl Brewery are available Monday through Thursday at 11 a.m. The Hospitality Room is open Monday through Friday. For more information call (512) 594-3852.



Top: Linda Boedecker leads visitors on a tour of the brewery — she has been doing this for fourteen years.

Above: Workers load the finished goods onto pallets to be shipped to their final destinations.