

AGGIE life

THURSDAY
July 18, 1996

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BEERS AROUND TOWN

The Home Brewers Supply sponsored the first stop, Carney's Pub, on Tuesday

By Jeffrey Cranor
THE BATTALION

Opera, Shakespearean drama, ballet, and painting are each considered fine arts. Now add beer to the list.

Just as a scholar of expressionistic paintings might study tone, balance, color, intensity, artist and nationality, a scholar of beer looks for gravity, bitterness or sweetness, color, aroma, brewer and country of origin.

Home Brewers Supply in College Station is sponsoring the first Tutored Beer Tasting Tour of eight local restaurants to educate the public in the art and history of beer.

The tour is an eight-week event covering seven local restaurants and bars (Brazos Brewing Company twice) each Tuesday at 8 p.m. The stop next week is Crazy Cruz's.

Sixty-four beers were selected by four judges in the community, eight beers each night. The judges researched the beer ahead of time to teach the tour participants what to look for, how to judge flavor, and how to determine whether the

beer is top- or bottom-fermented.

Gerald Smith, owner of Home Brewers Supply, said many people have one kind of beer they like and stick to it. They often do not dabble in non-corporate brands because they know little about them, he said.

"The reason we did this was to educate the public on the different kinds of beers that are available," Smith said. "It can be somewhat intimidating when you walk into Carney's Pub and see their 53 taps. What makes you pick out a particular beer?"

As Aristotle said, once the learning process starts, man will continue to strive for more knowledge. Just as a play has more depth to it than a plot, beer is more than hops, malt, sugar and water.

Chris McGregor, head brewer at Brazos Brewing Company and a judge for the tour, said Americans are starting to say "no" to sameness, lack of flavor and lack of diversity in beer. McGregor said it is not that large breweries do not make good beer — there are a multitude of types to choose from.

"Once you have an educated palate about different beers," McGregor said, "it

opens your mind to appreciating the huge range of beers out there."

Smith said Budweiser, Miller, Coors and most other large corporate brewers' beers fall into one sub-category of one style, but there are over 20 different styles.

Smith said the interest in these "alternative" beers seems to be growing. He said while Budweiser owns nearly 50 percent of the market, its sales are flat, and microbreweries are growing between 50 to 70 percent a year.

Jere Blackwelder, president of Brazos Brewing Company, said sales are up in imports and craft-brewed beers.

"The future of the marketplace in beer is going to be in the craft-brewed end of it," Blackwelder said. "That is where the growth is."

Charlie O'Douglas, broadcaster for KTSR radio, said the fascination with microbrewed beers is more than just a slight interest — it is a trend.

"The Brewfest a couple months ago was pretty large, and each one keeps getting bigger and bigger," O'Douglas said. "First the style was mood rings. Then it was baggy pants, then the grunge look.



Lewis Stracener, a connoisseur of beer, samples a cup at Carney's Pub in Bryan during the Tutored Beer Tasting Tour.

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Ways to beat the heat, boredom of B-CS

The most common question asked in College Station is not "Paper or plastic?" It's not "Would you like fries with that?" And it's not even "Can I buy you a beer?" It's the ever-popular "What is there to do in this town?"

We all love Texas A&M, but everyone needs a break. This summer there are plenty of places to visit for a weekend vacation that are close, fun, and most importantly, affordable.

Concerts

For the music lover in you, there are bands



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touring this summer that may actually make it through Texas.

There is Horde Fest this weekend in Houston, Hootie and the Blowfish, and everyone's favorite concert topic, Lollapalooza.

The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion in the Woodlands is a popular concert spot near Houston, the only drawback is that it is outdoors — it tends to be a little warm.

Toward the end of the show, when you're sweating more than the drummer, and you can't afford to buy a two-ounce glass of water and pay tuition, you know there's a problem.

Galveston is a great place to hear a blues band and talented street musicians. Of course, you don't even have to leave College Station to hear a good band. The local bands are determined to make a comeback, in spite of the untimely closing of Northgate Cafe.

On Wednesday nights this summer, Vertigo has hosted bands from Dallas, Austin and Houston, as well as local talent such as Lewis, Half-Life, Saltwater Llama and Not It.

Amusement

If you truly believe being strapped to a roller-coaster for two minutes is worth waiting in line for three hours and suffering a farmer tan for the rest of the summer, Six Flags-Astroworld is the place for you.

These popular amusement parks are offered in Dallas, Houston and San Antonio (Six Flags Fiesta Texas). In spite of the crowds, these parks are an affordable and fun way to spend a Saturday with friends.

And to beat the heat, you can visit Sea World

(sit in the "splash zone" and watch the dolphins), WaterWorld or Schlitterbahn (tubing in New Braunfels).

Shopping

Okay, so Post Oak Mall is not everything you dreamed it would be. But the bathrooms are pretty darn clean. The Galleria in Houston is close and offers a shopping variety and ice skating.

The Woodlands Mall is really not that special, but it's easy to find. Some people just have no sense of direction, but want to get out of town for some weekend shopping (so I've heard).

For antique shoppers, a fun place to look is

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