

Creemore uses Batch to brew the winning recipe for food, ale

Company took time to rethink future for the old Beer Academy

DIANE PETERS
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Just about every microbrew worth its stripes has a bar in this brew-pub-heavy town of ours.

Not complaining, just stating a fact.

Torontonians clearly love their creative, flavourful beers, and want to pair them with top-notch chicken wings, pulled pork, mac and cheese and other grub.

So into the fray we welcome Creemore Springs, a beer with an established history in Ontario that's now owned by Molson. Its new pub, Batch, sits on Victoria St. near Richmond St. E.

Molson moved into the property 3½ years ago, the former home of Duggan's Brewery.

The company started using it as a home base for its microbrew division Six Pints (which covers off Creemore) and running The Beer Academy in part of the space.

That venture had a unique concept: it would sell beer, educate visitors about beer and host events. But it wasn't a conventional brew pub.

"It wasn't generating any money and it's in a prime piece of real estate downtown," says Karen Gaudino, director of sales and marketing for Creemore Springs.

The space closed at the end of 2014 and the brewer took some time to come up with the right concept to get the brand into downtown Toronto and do it right.

"What became super-important was, instead of making it beer-first, we decided to make it food-first," says Gaudino.

That meant using local ingredients when possible, and homemade ones, too.

Creemore recruited chef Tim Tutton (formerly of The Beverly Hotel). He over-

sees a compact menu with some of the expected (Caesar salad, burgers, fried chicken) and some not expected (devilled and smoked eggs, pulled brisket on flatbread, rye gnocchi). Dessert offerings favour pie (coconut cream and sweet potato).

Andrew Bartle, who has spent time up in Collingwood, not far from Creemore, Ont., working for Northwinds Brewery, was brought on as brewmaster. He put together six original brews, including a pale ale, porter and India pale ale.

(General manager Fritz Wahl also has a local connection: his parents owned a farm in Creemore, the original home of its namesake brewery.)

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CREEMORE SPRINGS DIRECTOR OF SALES AND MARKETING

The 2,500-square-foot, 130-seat space feels strangely cosy, mainly because it is divided into several small spaces, including a lower level able to host events (with a ping-pong table on offer). Upstairs is divided into three seating spaces.

With the light pouring in windows off Victoria St. and pale colours making up the decor, this isn't quite like the other brew pubs in town.

With a well-known brand backing it, and a growing neighbourhood around it (two massive condos are going up nearby, while loads of retail staffers, office workers, lawyers and Ryerson folks work just steps away), Batch is already drawing a crowd.





CARLOS OSORIO/TORONTO STAR

Brewer Mack Remington checks the quality of the beer at the new brew pub Batch on Victoria St. The menu includes some unexpected items such as devilled and smoked eggs, pulled brisket on flatbread and rye gnocchi.