



Drawing on History

New brewery in Cedarburg tapping into old building

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Cedarburg - History will be on tap when beer drinkers take their first sip next year in the Silver Creek Brewery along the banks of Cedar Creek.

Located in the lower level of the 155-year-old Landmark Supply Co. building at Portland and Columbia roads, it will feature a 2,400-square-foot microbrewery and brewpub, with another 1,800-square-foot beer garden outside.

Although you have to walk around behind the building to get there, Steve Roensch predicted it will be Cedarburg's "prettiest front door," as he enjoyed the view of the waterfall below the Columbia Road bridge.

Roensch and his partners - Steve Venturini and Todd Schneeberger - confess they're behind schedule but hope to be up and brewing by next summer. Originally, they had hoped to open this winter.

"Once we started work, we realized you can't just bust into some of these walls with a hammer," Roensch said of working on the stout 18-inch-thick limestone walls. "You have to do it by hand."

"Our goal is to show off the building and let people see what happens during the brewing process," Roensch said.

He was standing amid the dust and detritus of the ongoing restoration project.

"Look at this," he said, picking up a salvaged 2-inch-thick oak plank, which he plans on using to build the bar.

On Tap



Photo/Michael Sears

Brewmaster Jeff Kolar takes a sample from a fermentation tank at the Port Washington Brewing Co.

- **County-brewed:** Beers flowing again
- **List:** Former Ozaukee County breweries

"This came from the old grain hoppers," he said, running his hand over it. "Feel the wood, how polished that is from nearly 150 years of grain running over it."

"We looked at 21 buildings, including 16 in Cedarburg, before deciding on this spot," Roensch said.

A lot of work remains, however.

"It's not as bad as it looks. You should have seen it in March," said Venturini.

Since March they've hauled out tons of old machinery used in the mill, which went defunct in the 1980s, cut up an old cast-iron boiler and salvaged numerous grain-polished oak planks and bricks that will be used in building the bar inside.

Outside, they've carted 55 yards of gravel and used stone salvaged from the building to construct retaining walls around the beer garden.

They even found an old oak toilet seat that used to hang suspended over the mill race. "Indoor plumbing," Venturini said.

They also recently installed a concrete and steel bridge over the mill race. They hope to eventually create a patio over the race, a stream of water diverted from the creek that turned turbines to generate the power that ran the mill.

All the work has been done by members of the investors group themselves, some of whom are carpenters, masons and other tradesmen, Roensch said. That has helped keep costs down but slowed progress because the work is being done by the investors in their spare time.

"It's a labor of love," he said.

The Silver Creek Brewing Co. grew out of a brewing club formed in 1993 that operated on Venturini's land in Silver Creek, a hamlet just west of Random Lake.

Plans call for installing a series of stainless steel tanks, each 15 gallons, said Venturini, the company's brewmaster - four primary tanks, eight aging tanks and two carbonation tanks.

They plan on brewing three year-round beers to start - a Pacific Coast lager, a German hefe weiss and an India pale ale, said Venturini, who grew up in Cedarburg. Roensch and Schneeberger live in Mequon.

"After that we plan on a couple seasonal beers, an apple ale and a holiday spiced porter," he said.

Within six months after opening, Venturini said, they hope to start bottling their beers and selling them in stores and taverns.

"Cedarburg is a good location. It's central, there's the tourism and atmosphere, and we're close to Milwaukee. We looked at some places farther north, but we see Milwaukee as our primary market" for bottled beer.

They hope to be open in time for next year's strawberry festival and hope to have their own Oktoberfest, Roensch and Venturini said.

"This will be good for Cedarburg. It's something not available here," Venturini said.

For more information on Silver Creek Brewing Co., visit their Web site at www.scbco.com.

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