



Ozaukee County Breweries

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Port Washington - With Cedarburg's Silver Creek Brewery on the horizon, Ozaukee County is enjoying a beer-making renaissance of sorts.

There was a time when almost every Ozaukee County community had at least one brewery. Gordon Engeldinger says you can still see their remnants if you know where to look.

"There were a lot more breweries than locals realize," said Engeldinger, who is in the process of co-writing a book on Ozaukee County breweries. The Thiensville resident also is vice president of the Mequon Historical Society.

By Engeldinger's count, Ozaukee County has been home to about 10 breweries. The oldest, longest-running and largest was in Port Washington. Generally known as the Port Washington Brewing Co., it lasted 100 years, from 1847 to 1947, and was most famous for its Premo brand ([photo of Brewery](#)). Its advertising - "The beer that made Milwaukee furious - tweaked its competition to the south.

But since World War II, no local beer had been brewed until June 1996, when Harbor City Brewing moved into the ice block plant on Grand Ave. here and began bottling its three signature brands - Mile Rock Amber Ale, Transcendental Wheat (now called Harvest Wheat) and Main Street Brown Ale.

A month later, the Port Washington Brewing Co. started brewing beer at the Smith Bros. restaurant brewpub downtown. Last year, Port Washington Brewing began selling it in taverns and stores throughout southeast Wisconsin, competing directly with Harbor City.

"It's a friendly competition," said Jeff Kolar, Port Washington Brewing's brewmaster, whose year-round beers are Pier 96 Lager, Amber Ale and Old Port Porter. He also



Photo/Michael Sears

Jeff Kolar, Port Washington Brewing Co. brewmaster, checks a control panel. The brewery started selling beer throughout southeastern Wisconsin last year.



Photo/Michael Sears

Matt Thompson, Harbor City Brewing operations manager, moves some bottled beer to the loading dock. Harbor City has been brewing since 1996.

brews a number of seasonal beers, such as a black cherry porter and a wheat beer. And he brews root beer and plans on bottling it soon.

Mitch Thompson, brewmaster at Harbor City, also sees it as a friendly competition among microbrewers and welcomes Silver Creek to the fold.

"I definitely support my local brewers," he said. "As we say, 'Think globally, drink locally.'"

Thompson and Kolar both market their beers through beer tastings held for private groups or at beer shows, such as a recent Homebrewers Association convention in Madison that attracted about 6,000 people and more than 60 breweries.

Kolar said he conducts about 20 tastings a year.

"In the fall we do a tasting about every week," Thompson said. "It's a nice face-to-face time with our customers, and we can hear what they like and answer questions."

Thompson said Harbor City's business has doubled this year to about 1,500 barrels. Kolar will sell about 600 barrels this year, but he hopes to grow significantly next year when he introduces his bottled root beer.

Harbor City brews and bottles all its beer at its Grand Ave. facility. No beer is served there, other than samples served during tours each Saturday.

Kolar brews beer only at the Smith Bros. brewpub, which houses a 10-gallon brewhouse. His bottled beers are brewed, according to his recipes, by Pioneer Brewing in Black River Falls. Bottles account for about 25% of his sales, Kolar said.

Microbreweries command only about 7% of the beer-drinking market, but Kolar and Thompson say the more breweries the merrier.

"Our biggest challenge is to take drinkers away from the mainstream brewers," said Thompson. "The more people are willing to become educated and to experiment, then the more likely they are to try our beers."

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