

[Taps on Tap: Hannison Woodworks has a handle on things](#)

If you've been out for drinks in RI, chances are you've seen Matt Eaton's work. Eaton is the artist behind Hannison Woodworks, which produces custom beer and coffee taps. Over the past seven years Matt has earned a reputation for crafting these striking works of functional art from which various local liquids flow. "The Nitro Cart was the first one locally, and word spread from there," he says. If you want to see Eaton's work out in the wild, you have quite a few choices: from the taproom of The Guild in Pawtucket to Buttonwoods Brewery in Cranston to the taps he's carved for Narragansett Beer.

Eaton moved to RI to go to Johnson and Wales, but tells me, "I decided that I hated cooking." He ditched the kitchen dreams, bought a table saw and started selling custom woodwork on Etsy. When a customer requested a hand-made beer tap, Eaton knew he'd found a calling. "I'd been woodworking forever, but I was always kind of looking for a niche market that I knew things about. I liked beer, and it spurred an interest."

Now, he's carved for clients around the world. "I just finished sending taps to a brewery in China, and one of my favorite projects was when I got to carve some taps for the Netflix series Mindhunter." He's even been able to use his far-flung creations as an excuse to travel. "My wife and I have gone as far as Las Vegas, just to see some tap handles."

But while his taps get pulled across the globe, in the shop Eaton keeps it local. "I work almost strictly with a sawmill in Coventry that supplies the lumber. I'd say that 95% of the wood I use is from trees cut and sourced in Rhode Island." The business is run from his house, and he carves, laser-etches and mounts each tap himself. He told me that many of his clients value working with local craftspeople, and the feeling is mutual. "I love all the local guys and their craft beers. I probably spend more on beer at the local breweries than they pay me for the handles."

The biggest challenge currently facing Hannison Woodworks is keeping up with demand. While Eaton continues to carve single-piece orders for home bars, some of his larger clients have ordered thousands of taps. It's a tall order for a one-man operation, especially considering that Eaton works a full-time job in IT on top of the 30 hours a week he devotes to Hannison.

So there you go — the next time you see a Hannison tap out there, you'll know that your Rhode Island beer is flowing from a Rhode Island tap carved by a Rhode Islander from a Rhode Island tree out of someone's backyard in Rhode Island. Local is good.