

The Rhode Island Brew Fest Returns!



Ok

, ok I'll admit it... I've had more eggnog than should be legally allowed, and now with the "holiday" starting to wear off, I turn my attention back to my first love, beer - sweet provider of merriment and carbohydrates.

And what better way to get through the cold New England winter than with a festival focused on craft beer? The Rhode Island Brew Fest is set to take over the Pawtucket Armory on February 1, 2014. This is only the third installment of the festival and it promises to surpass both of the previous festivals.

The Breweries:

More than 50 breweries will be represented, and they will be there to serve samples, answer questions and talk beer. Did I mention there will be samples? Most breweries bring at least two different beers and the vast majority will have four on hand. If you do the math, that's at least 100 different beers to sample. Better bring your drinking liver or hollow leg. Take a look at the official list of presenters at ribrewfest.com

Beer-ducation:

For those of you who want to learn more about how beer is made and how you can brew your own, there will be a number of booths staffed with people eager to talk about brewing. **Ocean State Hops** will be on hand with a few beers they've brewed using their own locally grown hops. **Rhode Island Brewing Society** will be there serving an assortment of member-brewed beers. [Full Disclosure: I'm in my second term as an executive member of the Brewing Society.] **Craft Brews** homebrewing shop will be on hand to talk beer and serve samples. At the last winter beer fest, they wowed us with the Galaxy Hop Honey beer.

VIP Brewers Dinner:

Previous festivals had two levels of admission, regular and VIP. VIP admission got you access to a private beer area and a bit more schwag. For this festival, a VIP ticket will get you access to the regular session, the standard glass, and a seat at the VIP Brewers Dinner, hosted by the **Rhode Island Brewers Guild**. According to Matt Gray, the creator and organizer of the festival, the Brewers Dinner is “a chance for all of the RI brewers to get together in a non-work capacity.” Believe it or not, even working in a brewery isn’t all rainbows and relaxation; it’s still work. The dinner is being catered by McGrath Clambakes, based out of Newport. While the food and beer menus haven’t been finalized yet, the beer menu sounds like it’s off to a good start. Grey Sail will bring their Oyster Stout. Bucket hinted they will bring a spruce tip beer. Foolproof will bring their Revery, aged in Sons of Liberty oak barrels. Each course of the meal will be paired with an accompanying beer. In lieu of the VIP tasting area during the main event, High Spirits distributors will bring an assortment of rare and aged beers.

A Festival First:

Previous attendees may remember the complimentary tumbler glass that everyone gets, which is pretty cool, considering most festivals don’t do that. To set the bar a little higher, this festival will give out the coveted Spiegelau IPA glass, jointly developed by Sierra Nevada and Dogfish Head and produced by Spiegelau. This is especially unique as the exclusivity to Sierra Nevada and Dogfish Head expires on January 31. The RI Brew Fest will be the first festival in the country to give these glasses away. I have one of the glasses from Sierra Nevada and I have to say they really do work.

The Official App: Brewery Sherpa

Local startup and beer evangelists **Brewery Sherpa** will be at the festival, but also are adding a special RI Brew Fest section to their app. For the festival, the app will have the full list of beers and will allow you to keep notes on which ones you’ve tried. If you haven’t heard of Brewery Sherpa yet, shame on you (you can make it up to me by getting me a beer). Brewery Sherpa is an app that answers a very obvious question we’ve all encountered when traveling: “Where’s the closest brewery?” Brewery Sherpa fosters relationships with breweries and publishes information about when you can tour, how much and so on.

The Details:

What good would this article be without details? Tons of good, that’s what. But here goes anyway. Regular tickets are \$50 per person and include the IPA glass. VIP tickets are \$95 per person, and include the IPA glass and a seat at the Brewers Dinner. The ticket price will increase by \$5 if you buy at the door.

The Brewers Dinner will be on Friday at 6 to 10 pm. The main event has two sessions, A and B. Session A will start at 1 pm and go until 4 pm, and Session B will start at 5 pm and go until 8 pm. Tickets are limited due to space constraints, so if you’re planning on going, don’t wait to buy your ticket.

“Beer, I Proclaim!”

Rhode Island’s newest brewery was approved for their license on December 2 and will debut at the Rhode Island Brew Fest. They will sample their flagship beers, Tendril IPA and Zzzlumber Stout as well as a few other concoctions (hint: rose hips and Brett) if they are ready. Proclamation has a 3BBL brewing system (3.5 on a good day) and is set to start distributing kegs through Horizon Distributors in late January/early February. These are definitely the guys to keep an eye on at the festival. Welcome to the RI brewing scene, Proclamation Ale Co.!