

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 05 Issue 16 Wednesday, October 12, 2011



Local Home Brewers Ready to Raise a Glass to Oktoberfest

By Cathy Tyson

Part art, part science, definitely a consuming and consumable hobby – Troy Feddersen and Mike Bernhardt are ready to celebrate Oktoberfest. With only four ingredients - malt, hops, yeast and water – that can be combined to produce an almost infinite variety of flavors, these gentlemen have found that making beer is a hobby they can sink their teeth into.

Lafayette resident, experienced brewer and local realtor Troy Feddersen started making beer at age eighteen with friends. He's come a long way from the simple brewing techniques of his younger years, expanding his knowledge and equipment collection. "There's a definite progression," he said, from extract brewing where the beer is ready to be enjoyed in two weeks to all-grain brewing. His advice: "The secret to excellent beer is good temperature control and lots of happy yeast. Anyone can learn to make their own good beer. It just requires paying attention to your recipe, process, and proper sanitation."

Why beer? "Quite simply, it's fun to make beer that I like, and to share it with others. It's like asking a chef what they like about cooking. A chef probably enjoys good food and enjoys their work in the kitchen, but what a chef is really about is sharing what they create with someone else. One of the best things about the DOZE beer club is becoming friends with other homebrewers, and everyone sharing their beer."

Along with fellow Diablo Order of Zymiracle Enthusiasts, or DOZE members, Feddersen participated in the Lafayette Park Hotel's first ever "Parktoberfest" recently. The group gets together once a month to discuss beer and brewing techniques, plan events and organize pub crawls. Feddersen estimates that a large percent of DOZE members are "certified judges" having passed the official Beer Judge Certification Program. "It's a very difficult exam to pass, much harder than my real estate license exam," he notes. At Parktoberfest he was proudly pouring a delicious German Hefeweizen, creamy head, medium body with a mind-boggling slight banana and clove finish.

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Troy Feddersen helps himself to a refreshing beer from his customized garage refrigerator.

Photo Doug Kohen