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It's official - Canyon Club Brewery is open for business

By Vera Kochan



Community members enjoy a good time at the July 30 soft opening of Canyon Club Brewery in Moraga. Photo Thomas Black

After numerous delays, mostly due to the Bay Area's long and wet rainy season, Canyon Club Brewery has finally opened its doors signifying that "prohibition ends in Moraga".

The weekend of July 27-28 welcomed all of CCB's investors and their families and on the July 30 soft opening, CCB began serving the beer-thirsty public.

Located at 1558 Canyon Road at Country Club Drive, owners Kevin Hamilton and Ken Markey, both Lamorinda residents, swear that their brewpub's name had nothing to do with the intersection. "Canyon" comes from the proximity to Moraga's impressive forestry just across the bridge. "Club" denotes a gathering place. Markey said, "We didn't even realize that our name combined both streets of the intersection until someone pointed it out to us." The redwood tree logo is a nod to the trees that populate the canyon's topography.

Initial stumbling blocks came from the county. CCB is the first establishment of its kind in Moraga and according to Markey, "They didn't know how to handle it. The permits took longer because the county had to start from scratch for us." Both owners agree that Moraga's government was very easy to work with. Other hurdles arose from turning the former World Savings Bank building into an ADA compliant restaurant.

Hamilton and Markey have kept an enthusiastic outlook through all of the trials and tribulations they've faced. Both have complementing work experiences. Hamilton invests in breweries and restaurants, while Markey has skills in marketing and branding within the beer industry, not to mention his former position as general manager of operations at a brewery in Texas.

CCB takes pride in its décor, furnishings and even serving plates. Much of the wood on the premises and

the outdoor patio furniture is recycled from other Bay Area structures or establishments. Markey explained, "The patio furniture comes from a race track in Stanislaus County. Each plate you eat off of is unique. They were bought at estate sales and antique shops." You might even eat off a plate that says "Happy Birthday." It's all part of the ambiance that they wanted to create - a down home place where families could come.

Hamilton addressed some community concerns about college students turning CCB into a hangout. "We intend to make this a place where everyone is welcome and comfortable, especially families."

Markey added, "We have families of our own, and we want them to enjoy coming here either to work or eat." That sentiment was in evidence as diners of all ages, from toddlers to seniors, enjoyed the convivial atmosphere.

On the outdoor patio is a small stage, made of recycled tree stumps. Weekends will see live music acts such as acoustic guitar - no heavy metal or rock bands. CCB wants to keep the peace with nearby neighbors. Moraga Police Chief Jon King promised to pay a visit if there are any loud noise complaints.

Besides the varied beer and wine choices along with wine-based cocktails, a menu of gastropub food with a nod to Tex-Mex and vegan options was devised to complement the beverages. Shared plates offer items such as nachos, deviled eggs or smoked wings. Various salads are available along with sandwich items like burgers, pulled pork or brats. Desserts include pear crisp, bread pudding and a s'mores kit. A weekend "Beerunch" menu is coming soon with choices like a ranchero bowl, Canyon Benedict or breakfast tacos.

Thomas Black thought he would be first in line on the July 30 soft opening, but said, "Not only was I not first in line, I wasn't even 100th."

One diner, Moraga resident Dan Mader, gave CCB a verbal thumbs up. "The beer is great! Everything that we've eaten is great! The area really needed something new like this. We're looking forward to the outdoor dining next time."

Mader's son, Miramonte High School student Konrad, will begin working as a server for CCB. In the meantime, he has been partaking of some menu items in order to be more helpful to future customers' selection questions. "I love it!! I love this kind of food!" he replied enthusiastically. Already taking the role of restaurant ambassador he recommended, "You'll love our House Pretzel and the Artichoke Dip is great!"

While not quite "a 100 bottles of beer on the wall" menu, CCB has a more-than-wide variety of brews available for anyone's taste to enjoy. Names such as Burning Ram, Rougish Roxy, Moraga Commons and Highland Marauder are just some of the choices. They also offer a nonalcoholic House Brewed Root Beer and

other beverages.

CCB has its own salumist who makes the gourmet patés, sausages, bratwurst and corned beef. An in-house baker makes fresh bread early each morning.

Hamilton and Markey want the town to know "how grateful we are to Moraga and the community for all the support." Hamilton stressed, "We want to be a place known for great food, great beer, great times."

Canyon Club Brewery hours are: Mondays through Thursdays, 4 to 10 p.m., Fridays, 4 p.m. to midnight, Saturdays, 11 a.m. to midnight and Sundays, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. "Beerunch" hours coming soon.

For information visit: www.canyonclub.works or call (925) 376-BEER.

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