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Crafty Cow in Oconomowoc toasts one-year anniversary



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By Sheila Nero

Dec. 15, 2015

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The point of the Crafty Cow isn't to be placid like a herd of cows in a pasture; it's to be as fluid and creative as the craft beers it serves to customers.

Owners Devin Eichler and Mike Bodow collaborate with general manager Dale Charboneau, Chef David Vang, bar manager Eric Schneider and artist Dan Loehmann, and suggestions flow.

The restaurant features 20 beer taps for craft beers and tallies about 600 "kegs killed" in Year 1.

The menu

While the daily beer list changes, there are some perennials: Karben4, a Madison brewery, is always represented, as are varieties of Surly, the Minnesota beer.

The Crafty Cow Facebook page listed some anniversary choices: Toppling Goliath Brewing Co. Pompeii, Central Waters Brewing Co. Cassian Sunset, Ale Asylum Impending Dissent and Brenner Brewing Co. Barrel Aged Witchcraft, among others.

The menu has some fun touches. Brats with caramelized onions and cheese sauce are named "Wisconsin, Born and Raised" and subtitled "1848 until we die."

The beef in Crafty Cow burgers is hormone-free and antibiotic-free. As an example of creativity, Cow of the Moment specials have included the Wick-Rib, a one-third burger patty stuffed with cheddar cheese, topped with two country style

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ribs and a Brussels sprout slaw, then drizzled with homemade barbecue sauce. While burgers dominate the menu, sausages include beer bratwurst, chicken, elk, pheasant and duck.

The background

Eichler and Bodow, both of Milwaukee, are business partners. Eichler worked at Water Street Brewery in Delafield. He's cooked, served, washed dishes and bartended. He met Bodow, a native of San Diego, in Minneapolis. Bodow has 15 years of restaurant experience on both the business side and the food side.

Eichler did his research and thought beer and burgers would do well in Lake Country. As the restaurant launched, Eichler called Bodow and recruited him. "I told him, 'I think we're going to be pretty busy,'" Eichler said.

They plan to open Bumstead Provisions deli and grocery store in Bay View, probably in March.

The tables

Just a guess, but there's a chance this is where young people older than 21 home for the holidays would gather when they're looking for some casual downtime. Laid-back dress includes jeans, khakis, sweaters, flannel shirts, stocking hats and hiking boots.

December is peak time at the restaurant. Eichler said. "Everybody thinks summer is the busiest time, but in Lake Country in the winter, people want to be back inside."

Good to know

WEBSITE:www.craftycowwi.com

ADDRESS: 153 E. Wisconsin Ave., Oconomowoc

PHONE:(262) 354-8070

FARE:Craft beer and sandwiches

RESERVATIONS: Walk-ins welcome

PRICE RANGE:\$3 for small French fries to \$13.50 for a Cheesehead Burger. Salads from \$7-\$10. Most beers are \$5-\$8.

HOURS:11 a.m.-11 p.m.: Sunday-Thursday. 11 a.m.-1 a.m.: Friday-Saturday. Kitchen closes at 10 p.m. Wheelchair access: Yes.

KIDS MENU AND HIGH CHAIRS:Yes

GLUTEN-FREE OPTIONS: Yes

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