



The Story of a Craft Brewery Dream

The Love Affair

The dream of Baird Brewing began as a love affair with beer. The love affair started many years ago as a flirtation. I still remember clearly my first full-throated swallow of beer. It was a Stroh's beer pilfered from my Dad's cellar stash and enjoyed together with childhood chum Matt Wolfert. We were twelve or thirteen. I don't believe Matt enjoyed the flavor experience quite as much as I did, but for both of us mischief in the basement had never tasted so good!

The flirtation with beer continued during my college rugby playing days. I was smitten not with the nuanced and sophisticated flavor -- this was sub-premium low-cost industrial lager after all -- but rather with the supreme conviviality and sociability that beer so powerfully facilitates. Beer is a beverage of moderate alcohol and extreme refreshment. It contributes to the joy of living with simplicity and no pretension. It was this realization that turned the flirtation into a budding love affair.

The love affair blossomed during my early years teaching English in Japan. I spoke not a word of Japanese when I first arrived in summer 1989. I did drink beer and play rugby, though, and these universal activities helped to bring down barriers and forge human bonds in a way both more efficient and enduring than words. The love affair moved to an even deeper level as I subsequently discovered the distinct and expressive flavors of beers that were being crafted by the passionate artisans of the American microbrewery movement. To the glorious attributes of beer that I had come to love were now added wonderful facets such as depth and complexity of flavor, nuanced balance and ... drum roll ... hop aroma, flavor and bitterness! I don't think I knew what hops actually tasted and smelled like until my first pint of real craft beer. My love for beer now had reached the point where I knew it would never wane.



The Dream

The transition from beer love affair to the dream of Baird Brewing happened in the heated alchemy of my love affair with a woman -- my now wife and co-founding partner Sayuri. Our torrid relationship began in Tokyo in 1996 (though we had known each other since 1993). Beer was a common pleasure. We enjoyed drinking it together, talking about it, and exploring the vastness of its world. This time coincided propitiously with the dawn of the craft beer (*ji-biiru*) movement in Japan and there was much excitement in Tokyo about the emergence of this new boutique beer scene. I wanted to be a player in it; Sayuri shared this desire. The goal of together building a craft beer brewery in Japan was the shared vision that cemented our bond and led to the dream of Baird Brewing.

The Struggle

In reality, life dreams often don't come true, and when they do it generally is only after the expenditure of much time, effort and anguish. This has proved true in our case. In fact, if we had fully understood how much time, effort and anguish would be required, I don't think we would have gone forward. But we didn't know, and we plunged in. We quit our jobs and headed for the Pacific Northwest, ground zero for the U.S. craft beer renaissance, to study brewing and explore the teeming culture of American craft beer. This was intoxicating fun. The hard work was ahead of us, back in Japan, where the *ji-biiru* boom was already turning bust. Brewing jobs were disappearing, foreign equipment suppliers were going home, consumers were losing interest. This is the milieu in which we incorporated Baird Brewing Company in March 2000 and then opened the doors of our Numazu Fishmarket Taproom pub in July 2000.

We launched Baird Brewing with the encouragement and financial support of four of my closest life friends. We were capitalized to the tune of 12 million yen. Within six months of opening the Taproom doors, to great quiet and much local indifference, we knew we needed more money to survive. My brother became a fifth leg of support, and two of the founding four further opened their wallets. Shortly thereafter my parents



gifted Sayuri and me some family money which we used to further invest in Baird Brewing. This enabled us to scrap through and withstand the lean early years. The odds were against us and these displays of love, confidence and loyal support will never be forgotten. Beer, though, has a way of inspiring this sort of fortuitous magic.

Why weren't we more successful out of the gate? A little bit of a lot of things probably contributed to our struggles, but one thing stands out -- many people either weren't interested in or didn't much like our beer. We were brewing mostly ales, not lagers like people were used to, and we didn't process the beer like most other breweries (big or small). Baird Beer is unfiltered and fermented twice, once in package. It thus is naturally carbonated and we serve it appropriately at moderate levels of carbonation and cool not cold temperatures. Visitors would call it "warm" or "flat." We would respond: "No, it's at the appropriate temperature for maximum flavor enjoyment..." and then we would explain, to those who would listen, why this was so. We looked in the mirror often and did many gut checks and we concluded, time after time, that we were right and that we would stay the course. Although most people were slow to come around, or never did, those who got it, got it. They loved Baird Beer and they ultimately turned our business with their unwavering patronage and their almost messianic word-of-mouth proselytizing. They were our fans, our friends and our unpaid marketing department.

The Progress

These passionate few who were both cheering us and fighting for us included some important players in the craft beer pub and restaurant business. Despite being the smallest licensed brewery in Japan (30-liter single keg batches) and possessing no bottling equipment, we began in 2002 selling Baird Beer in kegs to these fervently committed outside accounts. I remember driving with Sayuri the Tomei highway to Aobadai in Kanagawa prefecture to hand deliver the first keg of Baird Beer ever sold outside our Fishmarket Taproom. The account was a wonderful Belgian beer restaurant named COPA, which still carries our beer today. The beer we delivered was Teikoku IPA. Pioneering craft beer pub Popeye in Tokyo's Ryogoku area was the second account, followed shortly thereafter by the chic sake and shochu restaurant Takara in



downtown Tokyo. Baird Beer is still served at all of these places, and now hundreds more like it. We had turned a corner.

This momentum gave us confidence to further invest in and expand our tiny brewery. We purchased our first 'proper' brewing system late in 2002; we were up and brewing on this new 250-liter batch equipment in June 2003. We also took this as opportunity to begin bottling Baird Beer and, importantly, to develop artwork for our individual year-round beers. Per our word-of-mouth orientation we were introduced by a customer-friend to graphic design artist Ms. Eiko Nishida. Eiko-san is immensely talented and she immediately intuited how to express the true spirit and character of Baird Beer through her rustically elegant artwork. She continues to this day passionately crafting each piece of Baird Beer artwork.

The fruits of these various efforts came in the form of growing brand recognition and accelerating sales growth. Before long we were in need of more capacity and this led to our second brewery expansion in 2005. We were fortunate to find a decommissioned 1,000-liter batch brewing system that had once belonged to the now defunct Suruga Beer Company. The Fishmarket Taproom location was not large enough to house this brewery so we relocated our brewing operation to its current location a few hundred meters down the road. The project required more capital than we had available and we were compelled once again to raise additional equity. We looked to ourselves first and the response was unanimous -- every partner contributed more money. And then -- as hard work, honesty, and characterful beer would have it -- four passionate Taproom friends and Baird Beer enthusiasts decided to invest their hard-earned savings in support of the Baird Brewing dream. Our owner-partner family of seven was now eleven and we were more determined and committed than ever. The inaugural brew at the new facility was conducted on January 1, 2006, coinciding with the 5-year anniversary of the debut of Baird Beer at the Fishmarket Taproom. It had been a tough five years, but we were making real progress.

To continue progressing we now needed to move beyond infrastructure capacity enhancements and equity capital infusions. The time had come to begin growing our family of employee-colleagues. Five years in and two breweries later we still had only three full-time workers (two of whom were myself and Sayuri). I was the lone brewer



in our new facility and this was not sustainable. We began the process of recruiting, hiring and training would-be brewers. We didn't know what we were getting into. Our first problem was attracting interested candidates. There just weren't many. Brewing beer is a tough, often monotonous, detail-oriented job where the bulk of one's time is spent not brewing but cleaning. The sexiness comes in what you are making -- beer! The few candidates that did appear clearly were drawn to the allure of beer; the arduous nature of the work was a harder sell. Our second problem was ourselves -- we weren't sufficiently prepared for the difficulty inherent in the task of moving beyond doing everything ourselves to teaching and mentoring, systematizing processes and then entrusting others with high levels of responsibility. This is a supreme challenge faced by all young and growing businesses. We were not unique, but it sure felt like we were at the time.

We failed as much as we succeeded in our early efforts at hiring, training and retaining staff. But we learned along the way and we got better. At the end of the day, people are a business' most important asset. Equipment doesn't brew beer; trained, knowledgeable, passionate and committed people do. Likewise in a restaurant -- it is the comprehensive skill and professionalism of the staff that makes or breaks it. Fortunately, we understood this and we have pursued with relentless purpose the goal of creating a flourishing family of worker-colleagues. Today, there are around thirty of us working full-time at Baird Brewing. We have turned what was a weakness into strength. Not all of us in the Baird Brewing family are connected by blood, but we are by beer. And like blood, beer runs thick!

For Sayuri and me, the goal for Baird Brewing was, from the outset, more than just the crafting and distribution of characterful beer. It was the "celebration of beer," which we define as "the comprehensive enjoyment of beer in a way that enhances the overall experience of life." The best strategy to achieve this was obvious to us -- create English-style public house environments for people to enjoy Baird Beer. We do this through our brewery-owned and brewery-operated Taproom pubs. All are welcome at our Taprooms, including families with children (we raised four daughters within the walls of the Fishmarket Taproom). These are not dark dens of drinking iniquity. They are social, convivial places focused on human interaction and camaraderie. We consider them a sort of analogue Facebook. Interaction with patrons



at our Taproom pubs is the most efficacious way for us to spark in others the flame of passion for characterful beer that we ourselves possess. In the end, terrific beer enjoyed in a wonderful public house environment is all about one simple thing -- people being happier than they otherwise would.

In 2008, with plenty of brewing capacity and accumulated skill running the Fishmarket Taproom, we decided it was high time to expand our pub business. Tokyo was the obvious choice as it is by far the largest market for Baird Beer. We opened the doors of our Nakameguro Taproom on May 10, 2008, celebrating its birth on the same day as Sayuri's forty-first birthday. The Harajuku Taproom came next, opening in August 2009. We followed that with the Bashamichi Taproom in Yokohama, opening its doors in January 2011. While each Taproom shares common Baird Beer roots and the same philosophical orientation, each also is unique in important ways, including food concept and staff personality. If Baird Beer is our bread, the Taproom pubs are our butter. We're planning more of both.

A final, and surprising, component of our progress has come in the form of exports. Back in the 1990s when I was studying brewing in the U.S., the market for craft beer tended to be overwhelmingly local and segmented. Not only were there really no national craft beer brands to speak of, the idea of an international market for these flavorful and idiosyncratic beers was not in the realm of anyone's wildest imagination. Well, the Internet changed all that. Global information dissemination through the Internet has quite literally sparked an internationalization of the market for craft beers from boutique breweries the world over. We began our export odyssey in 2008, shipping to the United States the first overseas container of Baird Beer. Since then, we have gained import partners and niche access to beer markets in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, Singapore and Hong Kong, and the list continues to grow.

If you happen to be passionate about beer, it's a great time to be alive. And it's only going to keep getting better!



The Destination

During the 13-plus year struggle for incremental growth and progress, Sayuri and I never lost sight of our ultimate goal -- to build a beautiful rural brewery that demonstrates naturally the intricate connection existing between land and beer. Despite the modern industrial face of beer brewing, dominated as it is by large-scale enterprises governed primarily by economy-of-scale efficiency considerations, it is true that throughout most of history beer brewing was a local, rural activity engaged in by farmers. It has even been hypothesized by some historians and anthropologists that human beings first abandoned the nomadic life of hunters and gatherers and settled in communities in order to cultivate grain so as to brew beer.

What is beer brewing traditionally? It is a process that includes the following:

(1) Outside the brewery:

- *Cultivation* of grain (mainly barley and wheat) that becomes the starch source for ultimate fermentation by yeast.
- *Malting* of grain to help produce the enzymes to convert the grain starch into fermentable carbohydrates.
- *Cultivation* of hops, and other herbs/spices, by which to further flavor the beer, balancing it with bitter and other flavor attributes.
- *Cultivation* of sugar and fruit to supply additional and/or alternative sources of fermentable carbohydrates to yeast.

(2) Inside the brewery:

- *Mashing*: The combining of milled grains with water to produce sweet sugar-laden liquid called wort.
- *Lautering*: The separation of the spent grain from the sweet liquid wort.



- *Boiling:* Heating of the liquid wort and addition of bittering hops and/or other flavor components. The act of boiling effectively sterilizes the wort and the addition of hops provides flavor balance and contributes an antiseptic function.
- *Cooling:* The liquid wort needs to be cooled before the introduction of yeast for fermentation.
- *Fermentation:* Metabolism of wort carbohydrates by yeast and their transformation into alcohol and CO₂ gas.
- *Packaging/Conditioning:* Once primary fermentation is complete, the green beer can either be conditioned in tank for flavor maturation and then packaged, or packaged young and then conditioned in package for flavor maturation.

As is evident, beer brewing is an activity deeply dependent upon and intertwined with nature and man's harmonious cultivation of it. Our dream has been to build a brewery that completely reflects and embraces this reality, and helps to nudge modern brewing back onto its historical foundations.

After a 3-year process of intensively scouting Numazu and its environs for a suitable location, we have at long last found our future. We are building this back-to-nature farm-type brewery on a lovely three hectare parcel of property in the Shuzenji area of Izu city, right on the banks of the same Kano river that runs past our current Numazu facility, where it empties into the Suruga bay.

Our new brewery property will be called: **Baird Brewery Gardens Shuzenji.**

We began hop garden and fruit orchard planting on the property back in March of this year. We broke ground on brewery construction in August. Our new brewery equipment from Germany will begin to arrive on site in December. Building construction is scheduled for completion by the end of February 2014. Brewery commissioning is slated for March 2014. Should the stars align and the gods be in good humor, **Baird Brewery Gardens Shuzenji** will be spiritedly transforming nature's bounty into liquid gold beginning April 2014.



The move to our new **Brewery Gardens Shuzenji** location will include the re-installation of our current small brewing systems at the new site. We thus will have three brewhouses operational under one roof. On the third floor of the new brewery will be located the **Brewery Gardens Taproom** -- a tasting room open to the public that includes an observation gallery overlooking the brewery and an outdoor beer deck. The space in front of the brewery, between it and the Kano river, will be turned into a natural outdoor beer garden. Eventually, we plan to operate part of the grounds as a campsite open to overnight guests.

The main activity on the grounds, of course, will be the one from which all else springs -- the crafting of beer that bursts with flavor and character. What kind of character specifically? The acclaimed international wine critic, Robert Parker, has spelled out seven "characteristics of a great wine." We believe the same characteristics are applicable to "great beer." Baird Beer endeavors to contain them all. They are:

- (1) *"The ability to please both the palate and the intellect.*
- (2) *The ability to hold the taster's interest.*
- (3) *The ability to offer intense aromas and flavors without heaviness.*
- (4) *The ability to taste better with each sip.*
- (5) *The ability to improve with age.*
- (6) *The ability to display a singular personality.*
- (7) *The ability to reflect the place of origin."*

Beers of this kind are works of art that have their origin both in the heart of the craftsman and in the bounty of nature. This makes them distinct from mass-produced, mass-distributed, and mass-consumed industrial beers. Our move to Izu and the establishment of **Baird Brewery Gardens Shuzenji** will allow us to pursue the achievement of these seven characteristics of "great beer" with renewed vigor, heightened context, and a larger tool box.



It is a wonderful moment to be a Baird Beer brewer. It is a fantastic time to be in love with beer. Whatever one's dream, making it come true is happiness fulfilled. We can't wait to welcome you to our new brewery home and to share the joy!

Cheers!

Bryan Baird

September 2013



Accompanying Photos



College Rugby 1987 -- Camaraderie through Sport & Beer



Osaka Rugby 1989 -- Sport & Beer as International Language



Due Diligence 1996 -- Visiting Sankt Gallen Brewpub in Roppongi



Brewing School in California 1997



Due Diligence 1997 -- Visiting Seattle's Pyramid Brewing



Fish Tap August 2000 -- No Customers, Just Workers



2001 -- Current Draught Beer Manager Chris Madere as Taproom Patron



"What do you mean the beer's warm? Let me tell you something ..."



The Original 30-Liter Batch Brewhouse



A Visit from Popeye Owner Aoki-san -- 2001



Our Fans, Our Friends, Our Marketing Department



250-Liter Batch Brewhouse



250-Liter Brewery Cellar



2003 -- Debut of Bottle-Conditioned Baird Beer



Artist & Friend -- Eiko-san



New Brewey Opening January 2006



New Brewery Brewhouse



2006 - Jay & Sally Baird visiting Son's Japan Brewery for the very first time



Tap Fun 2002 -- Co-Managing Partner John and Wife Yumi have traveled the Journey with us for 13 years



2010 -- Together with Tokyo-area Taproom Staff



2010 -- Owner-Partner Family at the 10-Year Anniversary Party



2013 -- Baird Brewer Family: Brothers through Beer



The Four Baird Sisters -- An Experiment in Pub Rearing



Friendship & Happiness



Love & Bliss



Nakameguro Taproom Opening May 2008



Baird Beer to the USA



Gazing Upstream from the Baird Brewery Gardens Shuzenji Site



Gazing Downstream from the Baird Brewery Gardens Shuzenji Site



Lovely Soft Brewing Water from our own on-site Well



Building a Hop Garden



Hop Poles are Set



Hops are Planted



Planting Fruit Trees



A Fruit Orchard is Born



Ready to Build



Blessing the Grounds



Ground Breaking Ceremony



Visiting Germany where our new 60-HL brewhouse is being fabricated



Future Outdoor Beer Garden in front of the Brewery