

13 BARRELS BREWING

by GEORGE FULLERTON

The 13 Barrels craft brewery holds a premier location in downtown Bathurst, N.B., situated on the waterfront, providing a panoramic view of the Bathurst Harbour approach and further out into the Nepisiquit Bay and the Bay of Chaleur.

The moniker 13 Barrels is taken from a celebrated tale from Bathurst's history. In the early 1900s, prohibition of alcohol was supported by temperance leagues. In Bathurst, a barber named Joseph Gammon was a temperance leader and he heard of a batch of alcohol being transported down the Nepisiquit River to Bathurst. Gammon and his supporters met and confiscated the shipment that consisted of 13 barrels of product, and escorted it to the Bathurst waterfront where the contents were ceremoniously dumped into the harbour.

The inspiration to build 13 Barrels Brewing dates back to when the owner, David Young, was studying for his masters in

law degree in Britain. "While studying in London, I developed a taste for English style ales and bitters. I also embraced the pub culture for the sociability and foods." Building 13 Barrels, David and his wife Margo wanted to recreate some of that atmosphere in Bathurst. "We wanted to create a business that would contribute to the economic and social capital of Bathurst."

David Young, who was born in Bathurst, lived and practised law in Fredericton, while maintaining a second home in Bathurst. While living in Fredericton, he frequented Picaroons Traditional Ales craft brewery, and dreamed of creating his own brewery in Bathurst.

The Youngs initially planned to establish their brewery in the business/shopping area of downtown Bathurst. When that strategy was unsuccessful, a deal was made with the

city of Bathurst to purchase the present location on the waterfront. The brewery fit well with the City of Bathurst's efforts to revitalize the downtown. The Youngs' dream resulted in building 13 Barrels Brewing, just a year or so before COVID-19 restrictions put a major damper on the entire hospitality industry.

Key to a successful craft brewery is a master brewer who understands the art of making beer and shares the passion for producing excellent products. David Young met Ben Doucet who worked as a brewer at Picaroons. Doucet and his wife both happened to hail from Bathurst. When Young shared with Doucet his plans to build a craft brewery in Bathurst, Doucet agreed to become the brewmaster, and subsequently relocated his family back to Bathurst. Doucet was able to share his insight regarding design of the brewery, and had product produced for the official opening of the tasting room in the autumn of 2018.

The brewery is a steel-clad industrial-style building, but with lots of windows towards the front and a large roll-up door opening on to a large patio, allowing customers to enjoy the water views either from inside or from the patio. Inside, the tasteful décor combines wood and steel. A glass wall allows customers to look in at the brewing, processing, and canning line. The atmosphere, like the staff, is warm and pleasant. A large propane fireplace adds to the warm atmosphere, making the taproom a refuge on cool and blustery days, while the patio works well for warm seasons.

Melanie McLean joined 13 Barrels as general manager in 2021, managing the taproom and promoting sales in the Bathurst region. "I attended LaSalle College in Montreal, studying marketing. On a visit home to Bathurst, I heard about this new craft brewery starting up. After I visited the brewery, I decided I wanted to bring my marketing skills to the business." Shortly after meeting David Young, McLean began her employment and found it to be a good fit. "I enjoy craft beer, and I love living in Bathurst, and growing the 13 Barrels business is an exciting opportunity."

As part of her responsibilities, McLean manages the 13 Barrels Face-

book page, which highlights special events, celebrations, and food and beer. The page consistently announces special deals to help celebrate the change of seasons and holidays. The brewery also supports volunteer groups and sports teams to promote their endeavours. Recently, the Bathurst Bears basketball team was launched with an event at 13 Barrels.

"We have developed great partnerships with many organizations in Bathurst. We have partnered with Bathurst Art Society and will regularly host local artists in the taproom. Pride Chaleur has an informal meeting Sunday afternoons at our taproom. We have plans to participate in a pub crawl organized by Erica Lynn Real Estate, which will raise funds for a women's shelter or mothers against drunk driving. Despite COVID, 13 Barrels is a lot better known in the community, and sales to regional bars and restaurants is definitely growing," commented McLean.



Ben Doucet

"Like just about every hospitality business, we struggled with COVID restrictions. While most people were hesitant to go out for food, drink, and entertainment, 13 Barrels took beer to customers, making local deliveries and establishing a curbside pickup at the brewery," explained Young.

Young and his staff have worked hard promoting 13 Barrels products, visiting bars and restaurants to help facilitate getting products on the menu. "We had a full-time sales rep who went on to other interests, so myself and Margot travel the province, meeting with restaurant and bar managers to promote 13 Barrels. We



George Fullerton photos



also make a point of meeting managers of Alcool NB Liquor (ANBL) stores as well as agency stores throughout the province. Currently, we have three part-time regional sales reps spread across the province. Melanie, in addition to managing the retail business at the brewery, also promotes sales to bars and restaurants in the north of the province,” said Young.

“Although COVID has cancelled a lot of functions that promoted New Brunswick’s brewing and wine industries, we make a point of attending brewing-related events, whenever they go ahead. During the past Fredericton Harvest Jazz & Blues Festival, 13 Barrels joined with The Radical Edge sport shop on Queen Street to offer a beer garden featuring 13 Barrels products.” Young explained that they were looking forward to participating with Beer on the Bridge in Fredericton this summer. The event, hosted by the Rotary Club, invites craft brewers from across the province to offer their products on the old railway (pedestrian) bridge.

In addition to supplying beer by the keg to restaurants and bars across the province, 13 Barrels also supplies canned products through ANBL stores and associate stores. “We have our own canning equipment, which is a real game changer for us compared to relying on contractor canning services. With our own equipment, we can do the canning according to our own schedule, and ship product to stores or ANBL distribution centre. Our canned products are always available from our tasting room,” said Young.

“We have created a meeting place in the downtown. Younger people are great supporters of craft brewing, but we also see a lot of regulars who are of elder generations. We not only offer 13 Barrel beers, but we also feature invited brews from other New Brunswick craft breweries. And for our clientele who are not fond of craft beers, we also offer wines, ciders, and kombucha.”

Their menu includes heavier brews, including Pabineau Pale Ale, Rendez-Vous Rouge, Tall Tales IPA, and Wild Goose Stout. For lighter tastes, they have Dog Daze IPA, Gnarly Light Lager,



Melanie McLean

Tipsy Barrel Radler, and Hard Quench Seltzer. Additionally, Doucet also comes out with seasonal special brews, all well worth a taste test.

The brewery is also building a reputation for cuisine. Rather than building a kitchen and meeting related regulations, 13 Barrels has cooperated with Auberge d’Anjou Cocooning Café, located in the Village of Petit-Rocher, to provide soups, salads, sandwiches, and other food prepared by their inspired chefs.

More recently, 13 Barrels has also worked with a local caterer, Sauce Trait-eur, to provide foods with a Colombian flair. The 13 Barrels Facebook page announces updates to the food menu. The brewery has also hosted food trucks on occasions. “We like to support local for both drinks and foods. We also retail maple syrup and other locally produced foods,” said Young.

The brewery is generating a reputation for high-quality live entertainment on Saturday nights, featuring primarily regional talent as well as some from more distant points. In patio season, Young plans to have live entertainment on the patio—weather permitting. They

are also looking at the opportunity to have a busker entertaining through summer, several times each week.

Any visit to the north shore of New Brunswick should include heading to downtown Bathurst to take in 13 Barrels Brewery’s inviting atmosphere, sample some of its fine drinks, food, and hospitality, and bask in the stunning view.

