

## Canton man manages state's top brewpub

BY DARRELL CLEM • OBSERVER STAFF WRITER • OCTOBER 1, 2009

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Canton resident Chris Carrington loves beer — and not just the taste.

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While many beer connoisseurs are content to belly up to the bar for a cold one, it's a matter of reputation and economics for Carrington, 31.

He works as general manager of Grizzly Peak Brewing Co., a popular Ann Arbor gathering spot singled out as Michigan's top-selling brewpub three years in a row by the Michigan Beer Guide.

Grizzly Peak sold 1,617 barrels of beer in 2008, outpacing its nearest competitor by more than 169 barrels. In simple terms, that's 401,016 pints brewed on-site and sold last year alone.

Grizzly Peak — a place as beloved by its regulars as television's once-famed Cheers bar — last year topped its own previous record of 1,529 barrels sold.

"I'm extremely proud," said Carrington, who began his career as a 16-year-old dishwasher at a Grand Rapids restaurant. "We've built a good name for ourselves."

He has good reason for his pub pride, considering that Grizzly Peak, located at 120 W. Washington, relies on a seven-barrel brewing system compared to lesser-selling brewpubs with as many as 10 or 15 barrels.

Carrington cited the Grizzly Peak Pale Ale as the bar/restaurant's most popular beer among nine selections, although Victor's Gold, Steelhead Red and others have their share of fans.

"It's all brewed here," Carrington said.

And now, Grizzly Peak finds itself amid an Oktoberfest celebration which runs through Oct. 22, featuring seasonal beer such as an Oktoberfest lager and special menu items such as Bavarian pork chops, beer-braised brats, pretzel-crusted salmon and chicken schnitzel.

Just recently, Grizzly Peak and another Ann Arbor brewery, Blue Tractor, sponsored a pre-Oktoberfest event that included shutting down part of Washington Street and bringing in live music.

Carrington, who lives in the Lilley-Warren area of Canton, said the ongoing Oktoberfest celebration also features limited supplies of special-edition pint glasses that patrons can buy for \$5 and refill for \$2 off regular prices through Oct. 22.

Grizzly Peak has been in business for 14 years and employs some 80 people, including part-timers and full-time staff. Carrington said one of his biggest challenges as general manager is making sure the brewpub is properly staffed.

Grizzly Peak's regular menu offers 11 entrees plus sandwiches, pizza and appetizers. One of the hottest items is the Brewery Steak Sandwich, served between crispy potato cakes with melted cheese, bacon and porter cr@me fraiche.

"It's extremely popular," Carrington said.

Managing the brewpub is a job he loves.

"I like the fact that it's a brewpub," he said. "I'm a big beer guy, and this is my style of restaurant. We have some people who come here every day and others who come in maybe three times a week.

"I like the interaction with people," he added. "There's never a dull moment."

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Canton resident Chris Carrington is the general manager of Grizzly Peak Brewing Co., in Ann Arbor. (Bill Bresler | staff photographer)

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