

ASK AN EXPERT

PATRICK JENSEN, BREWMASTER

How do you create a custom brew?

Microbeers, which were hard to find 20 years ago, now flood the market.

So Patrick Jensen and his dad, Bob Jensen, have found a way to make Argus Brewery microbeers special. They work with local bars to develop custom brews.

"We've been going to bars and asking them what kind of beer they want and that's where we start," said Patrick Jensen, who grew up in Hinsdale and recently moved back to town. "We have this guy from Wisconsin that helps us with formulating our recipes."

Argus Brewery lists eight different beers on its website, including Pegasus IPA, its signature brew. The others, which range from Belgian ales to dark porters, serve as starting points for bar owners who want to develop a house beer.

"We found that it's hard to go to someone and say, 'What kind of beer do you want?'" Jensen said. "We have starting points and they can taste that."

Clients then determine if they want a beer with more hops, a fuller body

or a darker color — or if they want a lighter brew.

"People like smoothness a lot," Jensen said. "They seem to lean a little bit away from the intense hoppy beers. There's definitely a crowd that loves those hoppy beers — and I'm one of them, too. The general public likes the smooth, lager type beers."

Creating distinct tastes within one family of beers (Argus lists four different ales on its website) is done by using different malts.

"For each one of those beers we're using a different specialty malt," Jensen said. "That changes it a lot. The difference between the specialty malts is how long they are roasted and where in the world they are grown."

Argus also pays a surprising amount of attention to the water it uses.

"We use a complete reverse osmosis system, so that strips the water down to one part per million," Jensen said. "It's literally perfectly clean water."

Minerals then are added back in to the water. For Irish beers, Argus uses minerals that would be found in the water in Ireland.

"That's really unique," Jensen said. "Most microbreweries don't do that."

Argus launched its first custom beer, McCaffery's Irish Cream Ale, at Ballydoyle's Pub and Restaurant in November. The brewery's second custom beer, Country House Red Ale, will be served for the first time tonight at the three Country House restaurants, including the one in Clarendon Hills.

"It's a red Irish cream ale, but it's a little bit darker and has a little bit more of an amber taste to it," Jensen said.

Jensen and his dad spent the past three years working to set up the brewery, which is in a Chicago building that once housed the Joseph E. Schlitz horse teams and carriages on the lower level.

They have come a long way from their first forays in brewing.

"We really just started off with a little home kit, doing one-gallon kits," Jensen said. "Then my dad got really into it, and I got interested in it."

Jensen has been impressed with how helpful other microbrewers have been as he and his father have learned the craft.

"I just love the people," he said. "It's such a friendly industry. Everyone in general is just so willing to help. We're all just doing our part to try to bring down Budweiser."

— by Pamela Lannom



Patrick Jensen of Argus Brewery enjoys creating custom brews and the brewery's signature beer, Pegasus IPA. "It's a good IPA that you can drink all day," he said. (photo courtesy Argus Brewery)



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