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### Announcements:

- **Official Size&Wt National Hop Day Celebration-BoscOs 2/28**
- [Unibroue](#), a new beer in town, this Month? Keep your eyes peeled!
- [BoscOs](#) Brewmeister Dinner, 2/24 6:45pm \$50
- **Next Cregeen's Tasting, 3/3 New Belgium Beers, \$25 includes food**

### Desert Thirst Part 3 (or should I say, Part 1702)

This is the third and final installment of a series on our trip to Tucson, AZ.

M wanted to turn in early on Friday, so I would have to make alternative plans for my planned beer adventure. We had an early dinner then she turned in. After dinner I split a cab with a co-worker McB and his lady-friend, TC. Our destination was a place that my research showed to be most interesting, [1702](#). Yep that is the name of the place, 1702.



As you may recall, the question of the week a few weeks ago was about how to find great beer places when you travel. I got lots of good tips just in time for my trip to Tucson, and the one consistent comment was, don't miss 1702. I'm glad we didn't. We were in for quite the beer adventure. McB and TC are newbies to the beer snob arena. Little did they realize were about to begin their beer training in the deep end of the pool.

We arrived and had to walk almost a block, as there are no parking spaces in front of the bar. The cab went down to a parking area at the end of the block and we walked from there. The neighborhood was nothing special at all, and the strip center was dated. The décor of the establishment was unimpressive, inside and out. Looks, it turned out, were deceiving. The only other thing that was unimpressive about the place was the menu, which was a factor in M opting out for the evening. It is very limited. But we weren't there to eat, so hey.

We entered the bar and found our way to an empty table. We hadn't even arrived at the table and were already greeted by a very enthusiastic fellow named Eric. It turns out he

is one of the owners, but he was so down-to-earth it was hard to tell. We chatted for a minute and he quickly picked up on my interest in fine beer. He then told us that a fellow named Austin was the true beer expert. Eric then excused himself to go and fetch him.

McB and TC were anxious to join in a beer tasting extravaganza, so we decided to just order various beers and just pass them around amongst each other. This is a pretty safe practice, in that even if one of us had kooties, there would be enough prophylactic alcohol to keep everyone safe.

Just looking at the lineup of taps was enough to keep one in awe, and we would have the honor to actually drink what emerged from the same. There were just under fifty taps of draft beer to choose from. Many were beers I'd only had in bottles. I quickly noted that not one of them were beers one might see on television. [Click here](#) to see their current tap lineup. I was overjoyed with my first impression which revealed that there was not a Budweiser handle anywhere in the place. You can imagine my disappointment when I later discovered that there actually was such a tap on the premises. Luckily the one I discovered was strategically utilized in the bathroom.

The star of the lineup was a beer that I've written about several times, perhaps one of the finest beers I'll ever taste. For those who have been with us a while, you might recall my two trips to New York City, and my affinity for a bar there called St. Andrews. For it was at St. Andrews that I first had the opportunity to drink a *thirty year old beer*. The beer I drank there is Harviestoun Ola Dubh 30 (Ratebeer.Com [98](#)). Ola Dubh translated becomes 'black oil'.

Imagine my surprise when I discovered that 1702 had the Ola Dubh 30 ... **ON TAP!!!**. They sell it by the ounce at \$2 per. That would come out to about \$32 a pint. That may seem like a lot, but how often do you get to drink a thirty year old beer on tap? Check out [the Ola Dubh site](#), and click on the third beer for details on this one. This is a very cool site. Eric started us out with a sample from this tap, on the house. Did I happen to mention that I immediately liked this place???

Soon Austin came to the table and proceeded to see that we were treated like royalty the rest of the evening. Our waitress was warm and friendly, and I am sorry that I did not write her name on my notes. She was wonderful.

As a part of our adventure we were invited to tour a back room. On the wall there were the writings and signatures of all sorts of dignitaries. There were astronauts, senators famous beer people of all kinds, and now... me. I was honored to be amongst them and would love to report to you that I had something wise and profound to write, but I was so taken back that I wrote something pretty straightforward about beer purism, and poked fun at those who don't see beer as we do. In any event, if I should make a run at the Presidency some day, I'll recall that my first notoriety amongst the politico was in the back room at 1702.

We tasted so many great beers, many that I have never heard of. Austin also put together a collection of more great beers for me to bring back. Arizona is a state that

allows bars, with the proper license, to sell beer to go, not just growlers, but anything in stock. It was only after I returned home that I began to realize what a great collection he'd arranged for me.

The star of the to-go batch was a brewer that I had never heard of, [AleSmith Brewing Company](#). If you are one of the readers who are also in the business, make a note of this name. *This may be the very best brewery in the world*. Someone needs to bring this yet-to-be famous San Diego beer to Arkansas. I don't even know if that is possible at this time, as they are obviously small, but they have a collection of brewing talent that I have not seen even at the most notable breweries. One blog site states that there are 35 distributors on their waiting list. I clearly see why.

How can I make such bold statements about a brewery so quickly after I even learned of their existence? Try [these numbers](#) on for size –

Of the 24 AleSmith Beers Rated by RateBeer.Com...

1 Beer rated 76

6 Beers rated 90-94

**4 Beers rated 98**

**4 Beers rated 99**

**9 Beers rated 100**

**Over half of the beers from AleSmith rated 99+.** Can you believe it? Pretty much everything they make is state of the art. The brewers there are a team of former home-brewing champions. What I cannot believe is that I'm just now hearing of them. I'll be a better beer snob in the future. I promise. You'll see.

Other breweries we tried that were new to me:

[Lost Abbey/Port Brewing](#) (two brands, one company), San Marcos CA  
[Beer Valley](#), Ontario OR  
[Eel River](#), Fortuna CA

Favorites revisited:

[Great Divide](#), Denver CO  
[Stone](#), San Diego, CA  
[Deschutes](#), Bend OR

Many thanks to the fine folks at 1702 for providing one of the best beer drinking experiences ever. I am grateful for the chance to drink there, to sign the wall there, to have new beer enthusiast folks to share it with, and for the second tasting I had after I came home. And I am particularly grateful to Austin for introducing me to so many new beers, particularly AleSmith.

This ends the series on our trip to Tucson Arizona. M and I agreed that this is a very nice place to visit, and quite the beer town. On our last evening there we revisited both

the Frog and Firkin and The B-Line a second time. This only reinforced our opinion that they are top notch places to drink beer. The 1702 may very well be the best beer place in America. It is certainly one of the very best I've ever visited.

On the walk back from the B-Line we happened upon Time Market, a small place that did not show up in any of the research. I'd seen it the first time through, but we kept going. On Saturday I told M I just wanted to peek inside. What I found was a combination pizza parlor, deli, coffee shop and small food market. The hell of it is that the beer counter was HUGE. How this missed every radar screen I'd checked was beyond me. The clerk told me they were owned by the same folks that own the B-Line. I entered it on RateBeer.Com, so the next traveler will be advised.

### **A Few Final Thoughts**

I visited Springhill this past week and loaded up on Sierra Nevada Bigfoot ([99](#)). I plan to cellar some. If it ages as well as I think, I'll have a real treat in a month or two. At the very least I won't find myself in the same situation as last year when I was looking all over town for Bigfoot, only to find out it was all gone. It is a seasonal, and last season it went quick. Eric says this season's sales are also brisk. He also said that if you come in and let him know you are one of us, he'll give a 10% discount. He was well stocked, but also already talking about ordering more.

I've enjoyed remembering the great time we had in Tucson, and this story ends just in time for our next adventure. This week M and I head for the great Northwest. M's brother is stationed just outside Seattle Washington, which is the Napa Valley of beer. I can't wait. We'll be reporting this trip over the next few weeks.

### **Question of the Week**

What is your favorite brewing company? Why?

Post your answers on the [BeerReviewOnline forum](#).

We'll be continuing the glass series over the next few weeks. This week's column took a little longer to write. Note that every Wednesday, Flying Saucer gives away a glass with the beer you buy. In many cases the glass is designed for that beer. As we talk about the differences in glassware over the next few weeks, this might be a good time to get some different designs added to your collection.

**Don't hesitate to submit an article.** Express yourself. Find your muse. Tell us what is happening out there. Particularly, even if you don't want to write an entire article, do keep me posted as to what you know about activities and products coming into the market. Speaking of that, I'm on Unibroue watch. The very high quality Canadian beer line is headed this way. Let me know right away if you see some. All this writing is making me thirsty. I'm off to the refrigerator. See you next week...

Your (self proclaimed) Beer Snob

*John W*, BCoLR, CDC, MoA, OCP&SI

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