

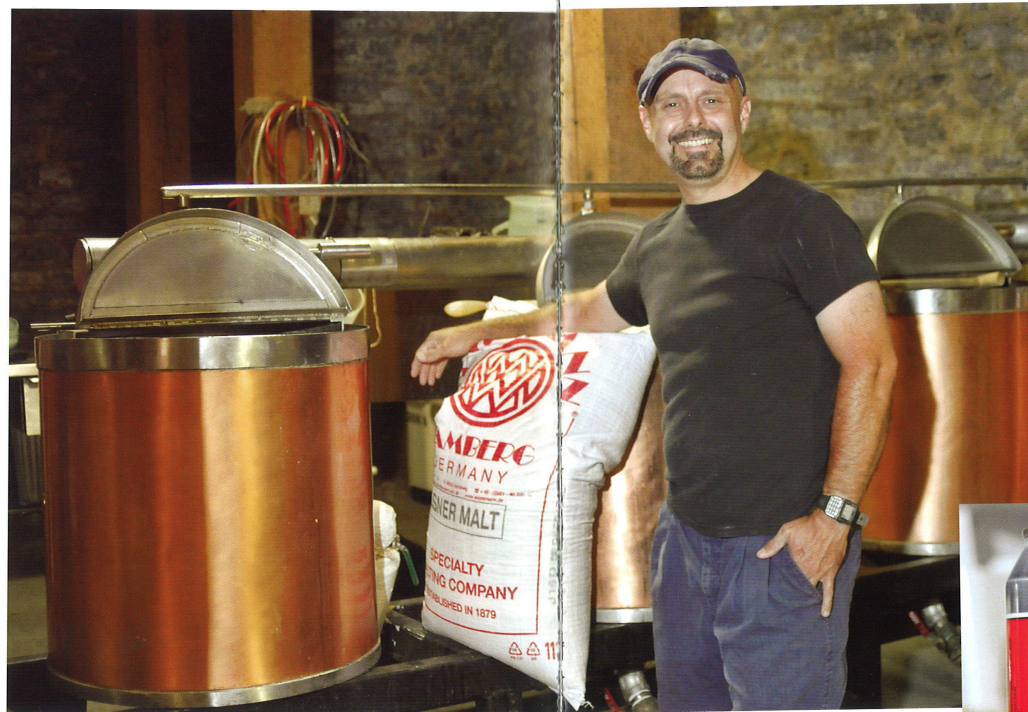
working in the city

# Crafting Beer

## with a Chef's Touch

Using flavors more common to the kitchen, MBBC cooks up unique beers.

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Chris Hunt at the Moccasin Bend Brewing Company proudly brews a variety of craft beers.

The Watermelon Wheat Ale is just one of MBBC's signature ales.



The craft beer industry is a fast-growing market, with an increasing number of microbreweries trying to get their foot in the door. Chris Hunt, co-owner of Moccasin Bend Brewing Company, knows the struggles it took to get to the point where he can now produce over 5,000 gallons of specialty and seasonal ales every year.

MBBC (Moccasin Bend Brewing Company) is located at the foot of Lookout Mountain in the historic St. Elmo district. Chris Hunt, Courtney Tyvand, and Duncan Guy brew in the basement of a building that was once used in 1912 as a packaging factory for K-rations in World War I. What began as a hobby for Hunt has now turned into a second job and what he calls "my baby." Originally from Chattanooga, Hunt and Guy became

brewers in 2006. Shortly after, Tyvand, an award-winning brewer known for his smoked porter, joined the duo. After becoming licensed, MBBC began selling their creations in 2008.

Craft beer and microbreweries are grabbing the attention of consumers who are looking for a unique taste, and workers involved in production are looking for ways to get their hands in on the creative process. Brewing beer is a chemical process that requires consistency in order to achieve success, and Hunt has brewing down to a fine art. Predictable flavor, however, is not what Hunt is trying to achieve. Hunt uses American and European hops along with unique flavors, such as watermelon and roasted sesame and pumpkin seeds, in the brewing stages to create signature ales. "Hops help spice beer, but

why stop there?" Hunt questions.

MBBC makes beer using the traditional process of blending sugars from malted grains, such as barley or wheat, with hop flowers and water. Hunt's techniques and original recipes create a desirable aroma, color, foam, and flavor in his seasonal and specialty ales. The characteristics of the ale are developed by the fermentation of sugars into alcohol and carbon dioxide gas. Craft beer generally tastes fresher because its shelf life is only three months.

When creating one of MBBC's signature ales, Hunt considers everything in the brewing process. Hops are used for bitter flavoring and adding aroma to the ale. American and European hops are combined sometimes to create what is called "mixed heritage." Mashing is the process used to convert starches from the

milled malt into fermented sugars in order to produce the desired composition of the product.

Hunt's Centennial Celebration Ale is comprised of single hops with a mixed heritage. The unique step in brewing this flavor is during the mashing process when the sugars start to caramelize because they are roasted longer than the average process requires. The Centennial Celebration Ale has a rich roasted taste with flavors of grapefruit, mint, and pine from the American hops' flavor combination, which tends to carry more of a citrus flavor than the European hops. The Centennial Celebration is Hunt's favorite creation.

The Watermelon Wheat Ale, a light summer beer, was popular at the Southern Brewer's Festival this summer. This unique ale combines watermelon juice during the

off as a hobby, but now I've become more of a chef, getting to know the ingredients," Hunt explains. The challenge of owning a microbrewery is getting it out there to the public. Craft beers usually target the type of consumer who is looking for something new and unique. Bars are hesitant to offer unknown labels because they do not know how well the product will sell. MBBC sells beer on tap at local restaurants such as Pisa Pizza. If you're looking for MBBC bottled beer, you can check out their selection at Greenlife Grocery at Two North Shore.

Hunt believes Chattanooga is a growing market for microbreweries because local consumers are willing to try new flavors. "A macro brewery wants all of their batches of beer to taste the same; my goal is opposite. I want to create something unique each time," he says.

Beer from craft brewers usually has a fuller body with more complex flavors. A wide array of specialty malts and hops are available to home brewers; therefore, you are going to experience flavors and aromas not typically found in light American style lagers and ales produced in macro breweries. "Every beer we create, except maybe one, has a creative twist to it," states Hunt. The aroma of the beer may remind you of citrus, flowers, or herbs. You may also smell caramel, cocoa, or coffee flavor combinations produced by the skillful selection of specialty toasted and roasted malted barley and hops.

Hunt is very proud of the business his partners have helped build. "My biggest vision has already been realized. I am able to show people the diversity of what is available to them. It's an education process," he says. Hunt wants to pull consumers away from boring everyday flavors and allow people to explore taste options they have not experienced before. "As a chef creates signature dishes, so can you with beer. There is no different flavor in food that you couldn't find in beer," Hunt says. **CS**

Hunt emphasizes that beer does not have to be boring. "This business started