



Waitsfield, VT



Lawson's Finest Liquids

Producer OF THE *Month*



BRATTLEBORO FOOD CO-OP

Producer OF THE Month

by Jon Megas-Russell



On a beautiful July afternoon, Jeff, the Beer and Wine Manager, and myself (Jon, Manager of Marketing and Community Outreach) traveled to Waitsfield, VT for an inside look at Lawson's Finest Liquids' new brewery, taproom, and retail store. Upon arrival we were received with a warm welcome from Chuck Derrick and TJ Greenwood...and then the adventure began. When you walk through the stunning front doors of the taproom, you are greeted by an array of smiling faces, amazing post-and-beam woodwork, and the smells of fresh beer and locally sourced food. On our tour of the facilities it was clear that the team at Lawson's is a lively bunch, filled with a passion and deep commitment for brewing absolutely delicious beer. One of our favorite parts of the tour was understanding how important their people are to them, as well as

conservation of resources. We use earth friendly products in our operations and re-use and recycle our materials.”

Sean Lawson has been brewing beer dating back to the early 90's. What started out as a hobby turned into something much greater. By 2008 he was creating top-notch, award-winning specialty maple beers and IPAs using his one-barrel nano-brewery in Warren, VT. People traveled far distances and waited in long lines for the chance to sample and purchase his highly acclaimed beers. Chuck, a friend and supporter of Sean, spoke about epic brew days that involved enjoying great beer and tasty food while surrounded by their closest friends. As these brew parties progressed, so did Sean's skills, and by 2011 he was brewing using a 7-barrel system. Around that time, he brewed his first “home run beer” which he called “Liquid Sunshine” (now known as Double

positively impacting the Vermont economy and environment they are embedded in. As they state on their website: “Lawson's Finest Liquids aims for the highest quality standards in our beer production and in how we build relationships with our employees, community partners, customers and each other. We do this by valuing quality, our employees, our customers, communication, community, our company, transparency, philanthropy, and genuine personal interactions. In addition, we value the beautiful Mad River Valley and work to reduce our environmental impact through



Sunshine IPA). It was a breakthrough, but he wanted to keep the production small. As he continued experimenting, Sip of Sunshine and Super Session were created. Neither of these beers were ever intended to be brewed in Vermont and never have been; in fact, in order to brew in the large quantities he was looking for, Sean set out to find the perfect location and collaborator to start this new endeavor with. He took his time to find a partner with whom he could have access to a large craft beer brewing facility while bringing his own recipes and quality control procedures. He found this partner in Two Roads Brewing Company, in Stratford, CT. In order to maintain the quality at Two Roads Brewing Company they have a designated team that only brews Sip of Sunshine and the Super Session IPA series. In addition, the team in Waitsfield, VT, including Sean, TJ, and others, work closely on hop selection, quality control systems, frequent updates from the brewery, and in-person visits to Connecticut. Oftentimes they blind sample hops and beer as a

team to ensure the finest quality and consistency.

Based on the success of the last few years Sean was able to build enough capital to hire a team of people to work with him to build his new facilities in Waitsfield, VT. In the fall of 2017, they began construction on their brewery, taproom, and retail store. After one year of hard work it opened in the fall of 2018. By early winter they were releasing several beers from their new location. As a group of folks who have always loved living in the Mad River Valley, they were excited to bring new life to the town and be able to utilize the water source from the Scrag Mountain aquifer. This is a special place that will be their home for many years to come. They applied their environmental consciousness to many decisions during the build. The brewery was previously home to a tent rental

company. Just across the parking lot, they built the taproom, which is filled with many local features, from the wooden timber frames, to the seating crafted by Warren Pieces, and the green verde granite from Rochester, VT beautifully displayed behind the taps. It was extremely important to them to fill the space with locally sourced materials wherever possible. They paid attention to detail with features like their sound system and acoustics within the taproom, and hired a sound engineer to install sound dampening features to ensure a pleasant guest experience. Simon Pearce made many of the light fixtures along with a core group of local contractors working to deliver a beautiful space for locals and tourists to enjoy Lawson's Finest Liquids.

Our tour guides TJ and Chuck told us they were the first two employees of Lawson's Finest in 2016 and 2017. Just one year later, with the opening of their new location in 2018, Sean and his wife Karen hired fifty more people to support the growth of this thriving business. They brought on both locals seeking new careers and



folks from as far as Colorado. Being locals themselves, Sean and Karen wanted to do as much as possible to bring jobs, economic investment, and prosperity to the region. Those who were hired are executing a varying number of tasks, including brewing, delivering, attending events, marketing, and working in the taproom, among other things. In the taproom everyone is trained to pour beer, sell merchandise, create and serve delicious local pub fare, and greet customers with genuine kindness that comes from being well supported by their employers: there is no obligation to tip, as they receive generous living wages and benefits. If guests choose to leave a donation, it is given to a local charitable endeavor.

The days of Sean Lawson only delivering to the Warren Store and being called the “Beer Guy” are long gone. They are direct distributing within most of Vermont and have partnered with the Vermont Beer Shepherds to reach all areas of our state. With tremendous growth over the past years they have expanded to nine states and as far south as Philadelphia, and now, New Jersey. During this growth period they have prioritized quality control within their distribution network which means keeping their beer cold 100% of the time during transit and on site

at retailers. This has been extremely important as hops can degrade from heat and light. You can be guaranteed that their products are both fresh and cold! Across all of their retailers Sip of Sunshine and the Super Session IPA series are widely available, but their new seasonal offerings being brewed in Waitsfield are quite popular and often sell out very quickly.

Brewing seasonal beers is very important to the entire team at Lawson’s. It has been a priority since their inception to incorporate seasonal ingredients and flavors. Keeping a fresh and lively rotation of beers that match the seasons is vital to their philosophy. Ensuring that the hops in their beers are consistently top-quality is another fundamental virtue of their beers. Most of the hops are grown in the Pacific Northwest by Yakima Chief Hops. They deliver delicious batches to the folks at Lawson’s, who can then taste, smell, touch, and test brew to ensure that the hops going into their beers are uniformly exquisite. Lawson’s Finest maintains tight control over the quality of their beers.

While we feature Lawson’s Finest Liquids as our Producer of the Month in August, we will be offering four of their beers: Chinooker’d IPA, Above the Clouds, Sip of Sunshine, and Super Session #8 (and later in August, Super Session #7). With such tremendous growth and popularity, Lawson’s Finest Liquids has become a true Vermont success story. It will be exciting to watch their future unfold!

Join us on Thursday, August 15th from 5:30-7:30 pm for a FREE BEER TASTING with Chuck from LAWSON’S FINEST LIQUIDS!

**Must be 21+ with valid ID*

AUGUST FEATURED BEERS

SIP OF SUNSHINE

This lupulin-laden India Pale Ale is packed with juicy tropical fruit character, bright floral aromas and delectable layers of hop flavor.

SUPER SESSION #8

Super Session #8 is designed to be a light and refreshing beer with low alcohol, yet the full hop character of a Session IPA.

CHINOOKER’D IPA

Chinooker’d is their traditional American IPA recipe which is chock-full of Chinook hops bursting with pine and citrus aromas. Firm bitterness and a balanced malt profile gives way to waves of flavor.

ABOVE THE CLOUDS

Their crisp, clear golden ale features notes of straw and fresh grain along with a subtle citrus-y hop aroma. An approachable and light-bodied brew.

