



Home » Business » Beer drinkers crazy for spruce

Beer drinkers crazy for spruce

December 16, 2011 - 7:17pm BY COLLEEN COSGROVE BUSINESS REPORTER

Average: 4.5 (2 votes)

The Christmas shopping frenzy typically reserved for parents scouring the shelves for the last Tickle Me Elmo hit a Halifax brewery Friday.

A dozen thirsty customers lined up outside Garrison Brewing Company as much as two hours before its retail store opened to be sure they got their hands on one of the brewery's six limited-edition seasonal beer offerings — spruce beer.

Fifty minutes after the doors swung open on what was a dark, dreary morning, 450 bottles were gone. By noon, a six-bottle limit was instigated and staff rushed around to restock shelves, catch a breath and share the good news on Twitter.

"It's not like we make iPhones or anything," brewery president Brian Titus joked just minutes before the after-work rush was expected Friday afternoon.

"It's cool to get this response and to see people so passionate about it."

Garrison introduced six limited-edition ales for the holiday season and the spruce variety is a clear consumer favourite. The ultra-premium ruby red beer is brewed using "copious amounts" of local spruce and fir and blackstrap molasses, and it is infused with flavours of dates, oats and a hint of liquorice, Titus said.

Last year, the Halifax microbrewery made 1,200 litres of the historical brew, once prepared by European settlers in Nova Scotia more than 250 years ago. Every last drop of the bold 7.5 per cent alcohol sipping beer sold out in 35 hours so, this year, production of its seasonal golden child was beefed up by 50 per cent.

Still, just six hours into the day, more than 50 per cent of the supply had sold and the remaining stock isn't expected to last beyond this afternoon.

The frenzied interest shows the consumer appetite for new and different selections is strong, Titus said.

"We did 21 different beers last year and the thing about it is, bit by bit, ourselves and other brewers have helped to create a spirit of experimentation and an openness to try new things in the this market," he said.

"People are really keen on what our next big thing is going to be."

The popularity of the spruce beer bolstered an already great — and tiring — few weeks.

The 15-year-old brewery was recognized by the Globe and Mail on Thursday as one of the top 12 craft brewers "shaking up the industry" and was touted as "the next generation of brewers" whose "daring flavours and surging sales are bucking trends."

Five of the brewery's seasonal selections will also have their time to shine in Ontario liquor stores next year. From February through May, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario will profile Garrison products as part of an annual feature that shines a light on unique breweries worldwide.

"We're in good company," Titus said.

"It's a challenge to come up with the quantity and that many speciality seasonals all at once ... but it's worth the effort."

The spruce beer and four other seasonal favourites — Winter Warmer, Martello Stout, Grand Baltic Porter and Black IPA — are on sale at Garrison's location beside the Halifax Seaport Farmers Market. The fifth, PiLs, is in its final stage of production and will hit store shelves next week.

Cristall & Luckett Wine Merchants in Bedford, Bishop's Cellar in Bishop's Landing on the Halifax waterfront, Premier Wine & Spirits in City Centre Atlantic and Harvest Wines on the Bedford Highway also have a selection while supplies last.

Customers who miss out on this round of spruce beer will be happy to know that a secondary, smaller batch is in production and will be ready after Christmas.

ccosgrove@herald.ca

About the Author >

By COLLEEN COSGROVE Business Reporter

Average: 4.5 (2 votes)

RELATED TERMS: Business

Pale Ale

Try Keith's Brewmaster Collection. Enter Your PIN For A Chance To Win!

[facebook.com/Keiths](https://www.facebook.com/Keiths)

AdChoices >

Bell Aliant business just got better

Business High-Speed Now for only **\$39** 95/MO. guaranteed for 12 months

[details >](#)

Top Stories

- Stocks lower on skepticism about EU pact
- Fed report, fears about debt crisis drive down TSX
- Businesses get boost from new booze rules
- 'Wondrous' site of art
- Gold decline no deterrent to drilling

Latest Videos

[More Videos](#)



Martin-Fired

Ads by Google

- [Best Beer](#)
- [Beer Bottles](#)
- [Beer Brewing](#)