

# Strong demand puts pumpkin beer in short supply

BY TIM SCHOOLEY

Bars and wholesalers throughout the region were caught by surprise when demand for pumpkin beer turned into a seemingly bottomless thirst.

"I walked into a store in the North Hills about three weeks ago, and the lady just threw up her hands and said, 'If you're here for pumpkin beer, it's all gone,'" said Cris Hoel, a local lawyer and veteran of the beer business who represents a number of wholesalers and breweries in the state. "For whatever reason, pumpkin beer is huge here."

In western Pennsylvania, the popularity of pumpkin beers such as Michigan Brewing Co.'s Screamin' Pumpkin Spiced Ale, Southern Tier Pumpkin Ale, Smuttynose Pumpkin Ale and any of nearly 10 others, has led sober observers of the trend to call it both a craze and a phenomenon.

Hoel said he's never seen anything like it in 20 years, and has received plenty of phone calls from bars and wholesalers begging for help to get more pumpkin beer.

Mike Indovina, who acquired Three Sons Dogs and Suds in Wexford this summer, wasn't so sure when pumpkin beers began to fill his stock room in August with little interest. Then, the calendar flipped to September, and he couldn't put it out fast enough, quickly selling about 80 cases.

"I've got people still walking through the door now asking for certain pumpkin beers. And you cannot get it," said Indovina, who still has some



JOE WLOJCIK

Mike Indovina, owner of 1 for the Road Beer Emporium & Tap Room, formerly Three Sons Dogs and Suds, in Wexford, said he has sold about 80 cases of pumpkin beer since September.

in kegs he can sell in growlers. "I can't explain the craze."

Nello DeSantes, owner of Save On Beer, a distributor on McKnight Road, estimated he's sold more than 350 cases of pumpkin beer. Mark Davis, owner of the Pittsburgh Bottleshop Cafe in Collier Township, said he sold 35 cases of Screamin' Pumpkin this fall, far and away his biggest seller, the next of which also was a pumpkin beer.

Tony Knipling, brand manager for Millvale-based Vecenie Distributing Co., said his company was the first to introduce pumpkin beer to the market. The eight brands of a few years ago has grown to about 12, all of which are sold out, with the exception of a few kegs.

The craze comes at a welcome time of year, helping bolster beer

sales that typically slide after Labor Day, DeSantes said.

While no local breweries made pumpkin beers this year, Hoel said two are considering it for next year, declining to identify them.

To be sure, it's a very niche product whose popularity will be limited by how much is made each year. Ben Steinman, editor of Beer Marketers Insights, a trade publication, said sales volumes for pumpkin beers were too small to be tracked.

The tricky part is a challenge common among retailers of all kinds: trying to manage a surge in demand that has yet to reach its limit.

Indovina said the lesson he's taken away is to buy as much as possible as soon as possible, and not to leave any order behind at

the wholesaler.

"It's a situation, too, that, if people like the beer, the price is not the object," he said. "It's a pretty remarkable phase to watch."

Davis, who typically sells his pumpkin beers at the same price as his other craft beers, said the key to managing demand for pumpkin beer is to preorder enough in the summer from master distributors, such as Vecenie or South Side-based Frank B. Fuhrer Wholesale, the region's largest. Beyond that, he said he's been rationing so there will be some left through Thanksgiving.

"It goes just too fast," he said. "That's the only way you can do it, really."

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# Burleson Cooke adds three more lawyers to local energy practice

BY PATTY TASCARELLA

Houston-based Burleson Cooke LLP has added three lawyers to its growing energy practice in Canonsburg.

All previously were associates at some of Pittsburgh's largest firms and raise the total number of local lawyers to 17, said Kevin Colosimo, Burleson Cooke's Pittsburgh managing partner. The Canonsburg office opened in September 2009.

Kevin Barley was named senior counsel at Burleson Cooke; he came from Babst, Calland, Clements and Zomnir PC. Samuel Stoller and Andrew Jenkins join the firm as associates. Stoller was most recently with Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott LLC; Jenkins came from Thorp Reed & Armstrong LLP.

"Each brings some business," said Colosimo, who joined Burleson Cooke in late



Kevin Barley



Samuel Stoller



Andrew Jenkins

summer from Thorp Reed, where he led the international law practice.

The firm came to Pittsburgh to serve clients working in the Marcellus Shale, starting with four lawyers. The additions enable it to offer a more comprehensive range of services, including "really sophisticated litigation and construction work," Colosimo said.

"It shows the direction that the practice is going, staying ahead of the curve," he said. "Initially, the focus was

predominantly on title work because that's what the industry needed, but, as it grows, it is important that we offer the full range of services clients require."

This marks the third firm where Colosimo has teamed with Jenkins. Both worked at Houston Harbaugh PC prior to joining Thorp Reed.

"I hired Andrew out of law school (in 2003), and I'm happy to have him with me at Burleson Cooke," Colosimo said.

Several local law offices have seen an uptick in hiring since the spring, said Lori Carpenter, president of Downtown-based recruitment firm Carpenter Legal Search.

"This is an indication that firms are busy and the market is starting to move again," Carpenter said.

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