



CAREER MOVES

Your weekly feature focusing on training, development and the latest on the job-scene

Craft Brewing is Ireland's new Big Business

Interview with UCC lecturer, Shawn Day



By JAMES O'SULLIVAN
Twitter: @jamesosullivan

WHEN one thinks of "craft", associations like small and independent—alongside a slate of other typically a-commercial terms—usually come to the fore.

One would think then that craft is the opposite of big business, but craft brewing has, in recent years, become just that—Ireland's new big business. Saying this, the craft brewing industry remains a volatile place in which to setup shop, with a number of well-respected microbreweries closing down this year, unable to compete with larger breweries for control of domestic taps. Furthermore, a lot of these bigger fish have set about creating and marketing their own "craft" productions, capitalising on consumers who are more interested in the idea of craft beer than craft beer itself. It's old-fashioned consumer culture 101, just with beer.

But a hostile marketplace hasn't deterred those who feel their wares are worth sharing, with Bord Bia figures suggesting the sector has grown by some 500% in the last five years or so. Such figures represent hugely significant growth. But this, as UCC lecturer Shawn Day explains, is really just a return to form for Irish brewing:

"A hundred years ago small craft breweries dotted the Irish landscape. From village to town, frothy ales and robust stouts and porters offered taste, variety and crafted drinking experience. During the twentieth century, technology and industrialisation led to consolidation and turned beer from craft to a mass-produced commodity. The gradual change was less noticed by drinkers who became less discerning and less demanding in their drinking choices."

What is interesting is that we now seem to be witnessing something of a polemic shift,



possibly driven by market forces recognising the potential to sell "authenticity", but possibly because of something more genuine at work amongst Irish consumers:

"Maybe it was because we took to travelling more over the past few decades and witnessed similar rebirths of craft brewing in the US and the UK, the demand for Irish craft beers has reawakened. Where there were eight microbreweries in 2008, ten years later, the Irish beer drinker enjoys a profusion of choice with nearly 100 thriving craft brewers today. Much like the taste for fine wines of diverse character, the Irish craft beer aficionado can locally experience beers.

"It's not just drinkers of course as fledgling brewers and seasoned entrepreneurs have risen to the challenge, embraced their passion and experience and prospered, offering an array of craft brews—some resurrecting traditional recipes and others

embracing the creativity of the brewers' craft offering tastes from away and combining ingredients in new exciting and unique ways."

Shawn also points to an interesting trend, the fact that overall beer consumption has declined over the past two years, but the demand for craft beers has nonetheless risen by 50%, posing the question, what is driving this undoubted attraction?

"Intriguingly, the initial growth in the craft beer sector in Ireland began during the recession as drinkers became more careful with their spend and chose to spend it on craft beer. Craft beer is a local product reflecting its local roots, and the naming of beers and breweries reflects this. Franciscan Well, 9 White Deer or Rising Sons combine local place names with mythology or reference to local landmarks to engage the drinker and remind them of their attachment to their place.

Irish drinkers are seeking more unique tastes than those offered by macro beer producers," Shawn contends.

"They desire beer made in places they know by people that have a passion for their craft and produce it in small batches for an audience that considers and appreciates their handiwork."

Local beers by local brewers for local customers: a winning formula for the local economy, it would seem:

"Craft beer drinkers are supporting their local economies, not just brewers, but farmers and pubs that offer unique and diverse ways to satisfy all manners of taste.

"It remains to be seen whether the Irish craft beer sector can sustain the rapid growth it has enjoyed, but the fortunate Irish craft beer drinker will undoubtedly continue to luxuriate in the variety of tastes and experiences afforded by the rebirth of craft brewing in Ireland."

CAREER MOVES



Appointment Notice

Murphy made Principal at Dunmanway's Maria Immaculata

Niall Murphy has been appointed Principal of Maria Immaculata Community College in Dunmanway, which operates under the umbrella of the Cork Education and Training Board. A strong advocate for teacher collaboration and the benefits it can bring for the entire school community, Niall's teaching career spans almost 20 years. After initially spending five years teaching in schools at home and abroad, he moved to Kinsale Community School in 2004, where he was a valued member of the team for 14 years. Aside from developing a structure at the school for in-house professional development entitled 'Féilte Scoile', Niall also coached various hurling teams, including the Kinsale CS Senior hurlers, who won the All Ireland Vocational Schools Senior B Hurling title in 2011.

Recruitment Roundup

Lidl to match Living Wage increase

700 Lidl workers will receive a pay increase in March 2019, when the supermarket becomes the first to implement the new €11.90 hourly rate recommended by the Living Wage Technical Group. Lidl employs 4,300 people across Ireland.

Services sector slows in the UK

The services sector in Britain has slowed to a seven-month low, with the uncertainty that surrounds Brexit still contributing to the country's poor economic performance. Growth in the UK economy has slowed since the summer of 2016, when the British public voted marginally in favour of leaving the EU.

Education Brief

The Tyndall National Institute, a partnership between UCC, the Science Foundation of Ireland (SFI), and the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, has signed a multi-million euro research agreement with Analog Devices which will allow the company access to the broad range of expertise housed at the institution.