

TRIO:

PUTTING THE CONCEPT TO WORK FOR SELLING WINE AND BEER

BY MICHAEL KUDERKA



Last month we introduced the Trio's "destination experience" business model, but this month we wanted to share how the team at Trio brings their concept to life.

Located in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina on the states' Outer Banks, Trio is Bistro, as well as a beer, wine and cheese retailer, that is uniquely designed to pair their extensive beer, cider and wine selection with any number of entrées or their world class selection of cheeses. Along with the retail, bistro atmosphere, Trio utilizes wine machines and beer events to keep customers coming back.

WineStations

To use the wine machines, patrons run a tab on swipe cards used to purchase tastes, half glasses, or full glasses of wine from six wine dispensing machines that hold four bottles per machine. Consumers end up trying a wider range of wines and have a lot of fun arriving at their wine selection for dinner, or to take home from the retail shop.

Beer Events

The beer on tap is ever changing and they have weekly tasting events. Very smartly Trio offered Limited Release beers, like Heavy Seas Plank IV which is very difficult to find, as well as holding Vertical Tasting events. While we were there they featured local favorite Mother Earth Brewing's Tripel Overhead vintages from both 2014 and 2015.

We caught up with John Minnich Proprietor, Beermonger at Trio to under-

stand where the concept came from and where he sees it going.

Beverage Media Group: We loved finding the Limited Release Heavy Seas Plank IV beer on tap and the Mother Earth Vertical Tasting, how often do you have these kinds of events?

John Minnich: We are constantly in search of limited release items for our draft lineup. Now that we've been open for five years, and our beer business has grown so much, we are frequently able to score these kinds of beers for our lineup. Our customers have come to expect it, and it's our pleasure to bring it to them.

However, from the first few months that we were open, we have been selecting packaged product for our beer cellar. We have over 40 cases of unique, rare, and cool beer in there, stuff that we believe will get more interesting, complex, and tasty with age. Much of that is beginning to mature and is about ready to be released. We will begin this fall to do some vintage beer dinners, where we select beer from the cellar, and pair it with unique and tasty small plates. We'll probably sell some of it in retail and/or at the bar as well.

BMG: As the Beermonger, what do you see to be the hot trends in beer?

JM: Hot trends are things like fruit infused IPAs, shoot—IPA in general is still where it's at, Gose, etc. I get what people like about those styles (some of them I per-

sonally like myself), and, particularly as a retailer, we do our best to keep up with the demands of the market to provide the best possible selections in these types of categories. You really have to be selective because you certainly can't carry them all, so we try to choose the best examples of these sought after beers for our selection. It certainly behooves us to stay on top of these trends, and we have fun with that.

In my role as Trio's Beermonger, however, I take a little bit of a different overall approach to beer. I am interested in growing this business over the long term — I think we all are (I'm referring to the partners in the business). In that role, I'm less concerned about the current hot trends, and more concerned with where this evolving beer culture is heading. I am beginning to blog and Instagram about beer, and I've selected the handle 'Beyond IPA', because I believe that, in just two words, it says a lot about how I feel about the future.

I'm a big advocate for bringing beer back to the table. I love Old World Styles, Sours, Barrel-aged beers. I think this, in the long run, will be where beer is headed. That's why Trio is what it is. This is why you see us pairing beer and wine with cheese and other great, classic food. Why we have a different vibe in our place. Wine, Beer, and Cheese, have been around for millennia and they are a part of worldwide culture for a reason. We don't want to be trendy, we want to be timeless. ■

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