



Inventory Management for Profit and Pride

BY MICHAEL KUDERKA

Showing your Style

While the temptation is always there to purchase and repurchase the same brands and beer styles each week, this approach to inventory management may not be the best strategic business plan.

As diligently as you work to position your store to stand out from and compete with large supermarket and retail chains, don't forget that variety and a unique beer selection beats limited beer selection and discount pricing in the minds of many beer consumers.

Promoting unique brewers and unique beer styles and offering beer tastings is one way to shrug off being regarded as a "me too" cookie-cutter beer retailer. Brewers like Dogfish Head in Delaware and Epic Ales in Washington create brands that are more like a gourmet entrée than a beer, and the ingredients these brewers use are so intriguing that a consumer cannot help but be a little curious to try them. You will find that your female consumers will especially be drawn to these fuller and more aromatic brands.

Brewers with Style

Although each brewery brings their own approach to brewing their brands, some brewers go beyond the boundaries of style specifications to produce one-of-a-kind brews that will spice up your inventory.

Epic Ales near Seattle produces a summer beer that is like no other. Their Solar Trans-Amplifier is light yellow in color, with an earthy rice flavor, and has wonderful tastes of bitter orange peel, ginger and chamomile.

More well known, Dogfish Head in Milton takes being "Off-Center" to the next level, and their brands are widely available. Brewer and owner, Sam Calagione takes pride in designing brews with unique ingredients and flavors. Palo Santo Marron by example is a brown ale which Dogfish Head ages in handcrafted brewing vessels made from exotic Paraguayan Palo Santo wood. Aging in these tanks gives the beer an incredible caramel and vanilla complexity that many consumers find irresistible.

Sh...Sh...Sh...Sh... Shati

One of the more obscure beer styles you might consider enticing your customers with is Shati. A few years back during the great hop shortage, Dogfish Head was one of the first U.S. brewers to commercially produce the Finnish traditional Shati with their brand Sah'tea because the style utilizes junipers instead of hops for bittering. More recently, New Belgium has added a Sahti to their product line as well.

Considered to be one of the world's older beer styles, Dogfish Head's interpretation Sah'tea is brewed with rye, juniper berries, caramelize wort, black tea, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, and black pepper, and it comes in at 9% ABV. This beer is incredibly smooth and obviously from the ingredients list, full of flavor.

The traditional Sahti brewed in Finland traces back to the 1500s and is found to use a number of grains, including rye, barley, wheat and oat, both malted and unmalted. Aside from the grains, the beer is flavored with juniper berries, and the mash is filtered using juniper twigs.

The Finnish hometown ale is typically hazy amber in color, strong, and sweet, with a distinct yeasty banana flavor, which can develop sourness over time. Commercial examples include:

Name	Brewery
Sah'tea	Dogfish Head
Sahti	Nøgne Ø
Lammin Kataja Olut	Lammin Sahti Oy
Lips Of Faith Sahti	New Belgium
Lammin Sahtia	Lammin Sahti Oy
Joulu Sahti	Bruuveri
Finlandia Strong Sahti	Finlandia Sahti Ky

Are You Thinking Out-of-the-Box?

How innovative is your store at selling beer? We would like to know. If you have promotions that go beyond refilling the cold box, we would like to hear from you and share your "out-of-the-box" thinking with our fellow *Beverage Journal* readers.

E-mail me at mkuderka@mcbasset.com with your successful ideas for selling beer, along with your contact information. If we write about your program in our column we will send you a free copy of The third Edition of *The Essential Reference of Domestic Brewers and Their Bottled Brands*.

Michael Kuderka is the Managing Partner at MC Basset, LLC. The company designs beer selling solutions and training for on-and off-premise retailers. www.thebeerbible.com - Contact Michael at mkuderka@mcbasset.com. © 2011 MC Basset LLC