

MONUMENT

CITY BREWING COMPANY



Ken and Matt Praay could've kept with their normal day jobs. Instead they decided to give back to their city by becoming brothers in beer as co-owners of Monument City Brewing Company.

By Doug Mace

The brothers Praay decided ~ not so accidentally ~ to begin brewing commercially after a series of fortunate events. Ken explained, "I started brewing at home in about 2006, long before [Matt] could even start drinking beer. It started out on the stove and he would get involved when he was home, and in about 2012 we started writing a business plan."

While Matt was overseas as a contractor it was more of a dream than anything, but just before he went back the two became more serious. While doing an annual family hike along the Appalachian Trail the idea became action. "The business plan wasn't really random. It

was more of an intellectual exercise." The two left their day jobs and began contract brewing their first two core beers.

While acknowledging the stability of each of their former careers, neither Ken nor Matt shied away from going after the master plan. Ken described the two brother's passion succinctly; "We don't do this for the money."

Both brothers showed great pride and excitement over the current and future expectations for the Baltimore craft beers.

"Contracting allowed us to get our product in the market. You always think what you make is good, but at the end of the day it's up to the consumer." Matt explained, "We were fortunate enough that the city supported us."

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"We have some phenomenal brewers here. Brewer's Art has been doing it for 20 years and they're one of the first places I had what I would call 'quality local craft beer.' Obviously you have Union and then there's newer breweries like Key and Oliver. Baltimore is in my opinion, a fantastic place to get good beer or a good variety of beer."

When asked if the possibility of a burgeoning Baltimore beer bubble worried him, Ken replied very simply. "I'm not concerned about the options because I think there's enough of a market for everyone to have their space. They're all great breweries and I love to have their beers when we're not drinking ours. I think it's great for the city."

The admiration for the local brewing community and its lead brewers continued as each brother listed a handful of others that either inspired or conspired with them throughout their early years. Through these encounters the cornerstone was laid for their new brewery and tap house in the Highlandtown neighborhood of Baltimore, set to open this spring.

The new taproom is built into the warehouse at N. Haven and Baltimore St. where wood was stripped at the Williamson Veneer

Company ... where walnut gun stocks were produced during WWI, and the King Cork Manufacturing Company operated. Since November of 2016, renovations included opening up bricked-in windows that offered minimal natural lighting, a new roof, and of course, beautiful stainless steel brewing equipment. Capable of brewing 20,000 barrels, the view from the taproom includes



every step of the process and the Baltimore City skyline.

From the name to the location, Ken, Matt and the entire Monument City team have gone to great lengths embracing the essence of Charm City; the traditional and honest nature of their core beers is an example.

In describing their developmental process the simplicity is calmly blended with creativity. "We really try to focus on the four ingredients and we focus on the style. The Rye is something we've been brewing at home for a long, long time. I wouldn't call it super traditional but it's certainly nothing too far off the wall."

Monument currently offers 51 Rye IPA and their Brown Ale as their core beers, with the intention to add the Battle IPA and a new Pilsner. Four seasonal and four limited releases will also be produced this year.

With the expected growth and recent success Ken remained humble, "20,000 barrels would be great, of course! Ten, fifteen, twenty years down the road, but that's still small compared to the bigger breweries. Our goal is not to be a massive regional brewery. We think staying in Maryland will help sustain the business for a long period of time."