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## A survivor Brick Store Pub celebrates 10 years

BY JEFF HOLLAND  
Published 06.27.07

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I celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Brick Store Pub on Day 9 of its 10-day run of festivities, culminating tonight with a tapping of Dogfish Head Black & Blue, an 11 percent ABV wine-like brew made with blackberries and blueberries. I have sung the praises of the Brick Store many times, but it is worth noting that this uncompromising gourmet beer bar has survived longer than many wannabes, sports bars and trendy cocktail lounges, all while breaking every rule about what a bar in a Southern city should be. There are no TVs, no video games, no neon signs, and most amazingly of all, no light beer of any kind. Not even any Budweiser or Coors. How is this possible?

I asked co-owner Dave Blanchard what they told people who asked for those beers. He said that they usually have a few German pilsners and wheat beers available to suggest, but over the years the taste level tolerated by the bar's customers has risen along with their knowledge of great beer.

"We took Warsteiner off recently," he said. "We have Victory Prima Pils now, which is a good choice in that category." Sure enough, a woman next to me was ordering a Prima Pils and happened to mention that she was sad that Warsteiner was gone, since that was her usual beer there. She said that she was getting used to the Prima Pils, and I suspect her beer taste will become more sophisticated the more she visits.

This uncompromising approach is one of the things that attracts people to the Brick Store. In order to keep its selection fresh and complete, the owners work with three main distributors plus one smaller one, "just for the really weird stuff," said Blanchard. This allows them to bring in draft beers not available anywhere else in Atlanta, like the recent Meantime London Porter or Lagunitas No. 10 anniversary saison. And people know it, too. "We get people in from all over the world who have heard about the place through Beer Advocate and other sources," Blanchard said. "We don't have to advertise to bring in the beer lovers."

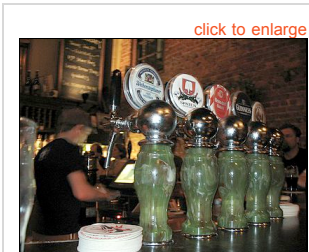
But the Brick Store is no tourist attraction. It is a neighborhood bar in a neighborhood that appreciates a simple, high-quality experience. Without all the distractions, conversation is lively. People wander among tables, chatting with friends and acquaintances. Beer is above all a social beverage, and the warm glow at the Brick Store comes from the happy faces of the customers and the soft lighting, not from TV screens.

The anniversary party has featured a special keg each night. Last night's special treat was the Oskar Blues Ten Fidy Russian Imperial Stout. Served in a 12-ounce glass, this thick, black beer pours with a milk chocolate-colored head. Strong, roasted flavors of coffee and bittersweet chocolate dominate, with a dark fruit and vanilla-oak sweetness to back it up. This a full-bodied, almost syrupy beer. They'll probably have some available for another day or two.

I also took the opportunity to try the Dogfish Head India Brown Ale, a cross between an IPA and a brown ale. My brother and I both found the huge piney hops in this one to be off-putting. Give it a try and see what you think. After putting our half-finished glasses of Dogfish Head aside, we decided to share a truly celebratory beer. It was hard to pick something from the extensive menu, but we finally settled on our own individual bottles of Fuller's Reserve Ale. Although the menu said this was a 2005 vintage, our numbered bottles, complete with their own red boxes, were from 2006.

Still, we weren't disappointed. This was one of the most beautiful and delicious beers I have had in a while. Complex caramel malts, whiskey and dark fruit flavors such as plum and raisin characterize this unique brew. The alcohol makes it a bit "hot," so if I can find some in the store, I will definitely snag a couple of bottles to cellar for a couple of years, which should mellow it some.

I got one more treat before leaving when I saw Mike Gallagher, another one of the store owners, passing around a magnum of Stone Brewing's Double Bastard. This top-notch California brewery's Arrogant



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Jeff Holland

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Bastard Ale is one of my all-time favorites, and I am excited by rumors that they are stepping up production for distribution in Georgia next year. The Double Bastard is another amazing beer from Stone Brewing. Ridiculously complex, I can't wait to revisit it with a fresh palate.

Cheers and Huzzah to the Brick Store! Here's to another 10 years! [clinking of glasses]

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