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1 February 2015

LONG LINES AT HARDYWOOD AND THE JOY OF EXPERIENCES

Waiting in line for an experience leaves you happier than waiting to buy something like, say, the new iPhone, according to a study NPR reported on recently.



(“Even if you aren’t guaranteed a ticket to a concert or a taco from the cool new food truck, people often enjoy waiting in line.” — NPR.)

But happiness is not the first emotion I would use to describe how I felt standing in a 200-person line in a non-air-conditioned building with 90 percent humidity on a 95-degree day. If I’m going to do that, there better be something wonderful on the other end. Like a chance to win a million dollars. Or maybe the best Pho you could imagine.

Yet Hardywood Park Craft Brewery gets people to do it again and again — simply for beer. So it seems like one of those experiences you should have, if you live in Richmond. And while I don’t

consider myself any kind of beer expert, it's hard not to get caught up in the hype. I waited in that stupid line. And I drank that fancy beer. And I will say that I felt elite somehow — certainly accomplished, at the least.

The beer I waited for Sept. 6 was a reserve series beer — which apparently is commonplace for Hardywood. (I think it's people waiting in long lines until the Gingerbread Stout sells out each fall that's allowed them to keep things relatively small while remaining such a highly-rated brewery, relevant on a national scale.) These releases bring out a special kind of brewery or beer fan. The die-hard kind. Willing to sweat their way patiently through crawling lines for the chance to purchase expensive beer. (A tad different than the ones like me who just know Hardywood for their Thursday night food truck courts. Because what is delicious beer without delicious food?)



The price the fanatics paid (\$56 for a four-pack) was for Hardywood's first wild yeast beer, Snapdragon. It's a blackberry ale that was aged in Barboursville wine barrels for two years. There were only two barrels of it.

My friend Jonathan was the real reason I was in the line. He wanted that beer. And suffered the will it sell out?! anxiety born of long lines for limited releases until we made it to the front. He did manage to buy some though and was kind enough to share. (He's got two to trade — who's interested?) It was a little sour and a little sweet.

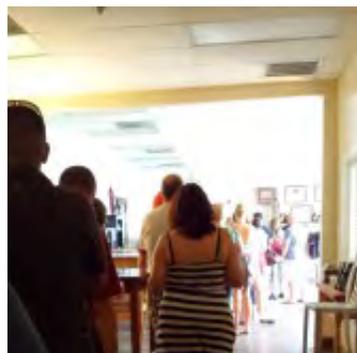
I liked it OK. But I'll tell you what Jonathan thought. He knows the beer words.



He said it was well made (“fruit-forward”) but will improve with age, and become more sour (“a sour on training wheels” “easy-drinking sour”). Sours are one of his favorites, I guess.

I myself prefer IPAs and actually Hardywood has one of the best — The Great Return. That’s what I drank all afternoon in the hot sun while staying near the ice cream food truck.

It seems like there’s always something going on at Hardywood. They all probably bring different crowds and I probably didn’t fit in all that great with this one, but it didn’t matter. There’s beer, food trucks, concerts, farmer’s markets, Bocce tournaments, regular benefit events and always corn hole.





But if there's one thing that draws the wild-eyed, beer fiending types (which is the mark of any good brewery, it seems) it's the limited releases. Check one out sometime when you're looking for a real Richmond experience to make you happy.

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