



Photo from colliderbrewery.com

BeerCulture

BY COURTNEY COX | BEER NEWS

Kiev Craft Brewers Optimistic Despite Odds

Months of political turmoil—including violent riots, the ousting of Ukraine's president and Russia's recent westward advances—have only reinforced the mission of two craft brewers in Ukraine's capital city of Kiev. "Collider Brewery's main goal is to let people know that the diversity of the beer doesn't end on the same type of European light lager or terrible Ukrainian beers," says Arty Starikov, a beer-writer-turned-brewer who runs Collider Craft Brewery along with Andrew Keycell, an award-winning beer sommelier for a retail shop in Kiev.

In a country where craft beer has yet to take hold ("Ukrainian brewers inherit the tradition from USSR, where in the first place was not the taste but cost reduction," explains Starikov), Collider has introduced an IPA, Pale Ale and Pumpkin Ale, just in the past year.

When demonstrators flooded the Maidan (Kiev's main square) to protest the government in January, Starikov and Keycell joined the movement. "We are strong supporters of democratic values, opponents of the dictatorship, and actively expressed our opinion on the Maidan," says Starikov. To sustain the protesters, Collider brewed 2,000 liters of Pale Ale with Citra hops from the US and Aramis hops from France, "to show that Europe and America are supporting Ukraine."

Beer is a key force in bringing people together, Starikov says. "Collider beers united ordinary Ukrainian beer lovers and expats from USA, Canada and Europe accustomed to craft beers."

Collider embraces the experimental side of brewing; their name is even an homage to the Large Hadron Collider. But persuading

locals to try their first IPA is the least of their challenges. "To tell the truth, doing business in Ukraine is very hard. Every day you must continue working despite the obstacles," says Starikov. "The entire state apparatus operates on corruption and bribes. In addition, Ukraine is facing currency devaluation, so bank loans [are] unreal—25- to 30-percent annual percentage rate. Our state has prohibited loans in foreign currencies."

The tough business climate means Collider will stick to contract brewing on their Spiedel Braumeister system for the next couple of years. "A mission of the project is to start a beer revolution in Ukraine. Now we can confidently say that we made huge steps in that direction," Starikov says. "We are optimistic and believe in a good future."