

Sacred Heart University

From the Selected Works of Kirk Bartholomew

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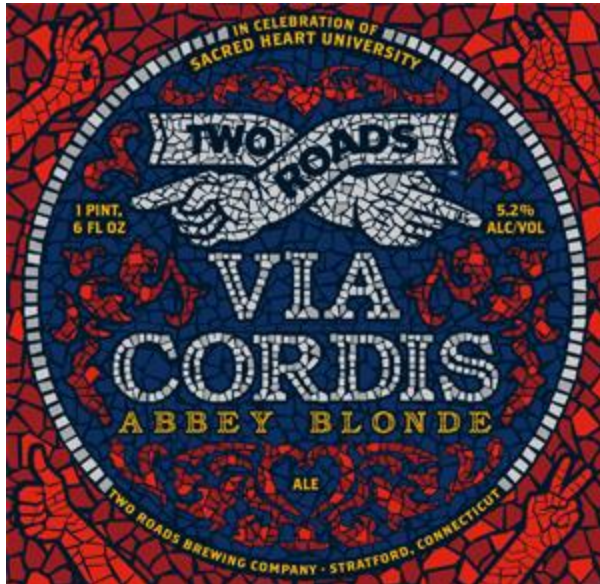
Local Brewery to Launch New Craft Beer to Celebrate SHU

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Local Brewery to Launch New Craft Beer to Celebrate SHU's 50th Anniversary



News Story: September 11, 2013

Beer will debut at Red's on Friday, September 13, at 5 p.m.

Two Roads Brewing Company, a Stratford-based company, will launch a new craft beer that will celebrate Sacred Heart University's 50th anniversary, raise money for scholarships and honor the centuries-old link between Catholicism and beer.

The beer, which will make its debut Friday, September 13, is being called Via Cordis, Latin for "way of the heart." The launch party is slated for 5 p.m. at Red's in the Linda E. McMahon Commons. Free samples of the brew will be available.

The brewery is planning to make 70 barrels, or about 2,450 gallons, of the craft beer, which its makers describe as a golden-colored Abbey Blonde, or abbey single, said Geoffrey F. Stopper, an assistant professor of biology, and Kirk Bartholomew, an associate professor and former chair of the university's Biology department. The beer is being fermented with yeast sourced from an active Catholic monastery brewery in Belgium.

"It will be a blonde, very light-colored beer with a fruity, maybe even a little spicy, taste to it," Stopper said.

Stopper credits Sue Deschênes, an associate professor of biology at the university, for the name Via Cordis.

The beer will be distributed throughout Connecticut via the brewery's regular distribution network. It will also be made available at Red's, the university's on-campus pub. In addition, it will be available at the brewery's tasting room, at 1700 Stratford Ave., Stratford.

Revenue from sale of the beer will result in a donation to Sacred Heart University's student scholarship funds, Stopper said. Two Roads has indicated that it will likely produce a batch next year, depending on the response of beer drinkers.

Two Roads Brewing Co., which opened its doors in December of 2012, is owned and operated by four principal partners, Brad Hittle, the company's CEO; Peter Doering, the chief financial officer; Clem Pellani, the vice president of Marketing and Sales and Phil Markowski, the head brewmaster. The brewery, which will produce about 30,000 barrels of beer in 2013, employs 28 full-time workers and about 10 part-timers, Pellani said.

Via Cordis was crafted by Stopper and Bartholomew in partnership with brewers at Two Roads, led by Markowski. The relationship between the parties began as a professional arrangement in early 2012, before the brewery even opened, but quickly grew into a friendship, and then a collaboration, Pellani said.

“They (Stopper and Bartholomew) were doing some work here on yeast management, helping us manage and explore new yeast strains,” Pellani said. “We all worked together so well that when they brought up the possibility of collaborating on a new beer, we were immediately interested.”

Finding a pair of university-level biology professors hard at work within the confines of a brewery is not as strange a concept as it may first appear, Bartholomew said.

“There’s actually a lot of science involved in brewing,” he notes, listing microbiology, chemistry and the physics of heat exchange as three academic areas routinely encompassed by the brewing process. “You could actually teach a pretty complete biology curriculum just using examples from the fermentation process.”

Added Stopper: “You just can’t do it (brew beer) without the science.”

Two Roads has also graciously opened its doors to SHU students and is currently hosting its third biology student as an intern in its microbiology lab, Stopper noted. “We are very grateful to Two Roads for providing this kind of experience for our students,” he said.

There are many historical connections between Catholicism and brewing dating back more than a thousand years to the reign of Charlemagne, according to Stopper. Aside from being centers of education and literacy upon which modern universities are modeled, Catholic monasteries were also major centers of brewing throughout the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and beyond.

“In a functioning monastery of that era, brewing was just a regular part of the everyday chores,” he said.

In fact, the oldest continuously operating brewery in the world is believed to be the former Catholic monastery at Weihenstephaner in Bavaria, Germany, which was secularized by Napoleon in 1803, Stopper said. The second oldest is believed to be an operating monastery in Weltenburg, Germany. Written records indicate a brewery was licensed at Weihenstephaner Abbey in 1040, while Weltenburg Abbey was licensed in 1050.