

Discussion with a brewmaster

Charles Noll blends his skills with brews

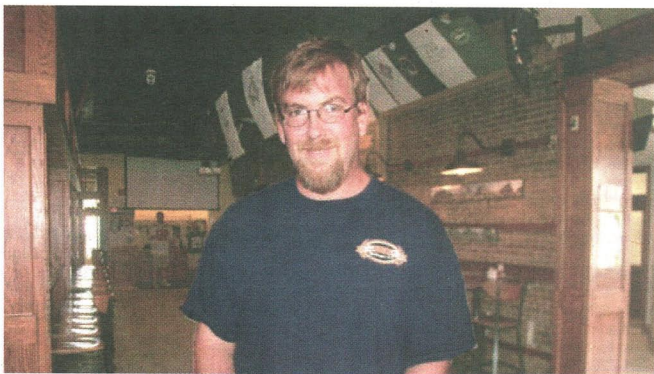
By LINDA LEUZZI

Charles Noll presides over five gleaming tanks that make beer at The BrickHouse Brewery in Patchogue. As brewmaster, it's his astute ingredient mix in these huge fermenters, four of them ten barrels, one 20 barrels that produce the brews customers hoist in celebration, for their health, or just because.

Noll lives in Patchogue and has been the BrickHouse's new brewmaster since March. He grew up in the Buffalo suburb of West Falls, New York and was aiming for a criminal justice career at SUNY Albany when he felt the fit wasn't right. A home brewer for a few years, the artisanal beer call became stronger in the early 1990s and it lured him.

Noll moved to Portland, Oregon. Referred to as "Munich on the Willamette," because of its proliferation of brewpubs and microbreweries, The Oregon Brewers Festival will be celebrating its 25th year here in 2012, in fact, a nod to the craft beer sweep that is identified with this city. Portland was a perfect environment for immersing Noll in the beer craft industry, but not for the job he wanted. "Even though there were a lot of breweries, it was very competitive," he said. After finding an entrance niche closed, Noll opted for a five-week program at the American Brewers Guild in Woodland, California where he graduated in 1997. As fate would have it, the brewmaster was leaving where he interned, the Malt River Brewing Company in Latham, an Albany suburb, and he recommended Noll.

The job is a varied mix of recipe developing, ordering materials and making sure the inventory meets demand. "It also combines customer relations," he said.



Charles Noll is the new brewmaster of BrickHouse Brewery, which offers craft beers.

ADV/Leuzzi

"Talking to people at the end of the day, those are the more fun parts. It's almost like having a kitchen without helping hands because you also have to scrub floors and polish metal. How good the beer is, that's proportionate to how clean things are." Malt, of course, is the base ingredient, like grapes are to wine, he points out. After roasting the grain, he adjusts the flavor profile, similar to roasting coffee to a darker color. Stouts and porter are among the darker ales; lighter ales are the lagers and pilsners but overall it's a fine-tuning of beer alchemy aided by a milling system setup in the basement, auger system pipes, mash tun, and kettle and the process sequence. The craft beer popularity is out there, Noll said. "There have been a slew of beer pubs

opening over the last year on Long Island," Noll said.

BrickHouse Brewery Owner Tom Keegan had his eye on Noll for a while. "There was a brewery down in Hyattsville, Maryland, Franklin's, when I first learned of him," Keegan explained. "He sounded like the guy we were looking for and then he moved on." Noll was at Harpoon's in Windsor, Vermont; and had spoken to Keegan during his stint in Hyattsville when Keegan caught up with him. They agreed to meet at Keegan Ale in Kingston, New York where he owns a brewery with his son. "I found him to be very knowledgeable," he said. "Then I interviewed him here with my partners. We're thoroughly pleased with what he brings to the BrickHouse." ■