



UNSTOPPABLE HOPS

Competition is the last thing on the minds of Denver's top brewers, who are embodying the city's welcoming spirit and working together to create some of the best craft beers in America today.

BY JAIMIE SCHOEN | PHOTOGRAPHS BY BENJAMIN RASMUSSEN



TAPPING INTO THE SCENE
From left: A lofty interior and bold flavors make for a savory day at Epic Brewing Company. One's cup runneth over with draft options at Comrade Brewing. Denver's convivial spirit is on display at Spangalang Brewery.

It's often lauded as the Napa Valley

producing around 20 different beers a year. That's almost 1,000 beers a year—guaranteeing something for virtually anyone, whether the casual drinker or what brewers affectionately call a “beer geek.” Beyond innovative experiments and award-winning brews, there is an energy in the tasting rooms that is unique to Denver. Brewmasters here collaborate on technique, borrow ingredients and share equipment. “It raises the tide for all ships and propels the industry,” Kurowski says. With productions ranging from single-batch ales aged in bourbon barrels to thousands of gallons of pale ale, Denver brewers are working at all levels, with one common goal: to produce the spectacular varieties that make the city a world-class destination for craft beer.

The Longtime Favorite Great Divide

1812 35th Street (barrel bar) and 2201 Arapahoe Street (brewery and taproom), greatdivide.com
Founder Brian Dunn's passion for flavor led him to create balanced brews with a depth and boldness that have turned Great Divide into one of America's most celebrated

craft breweries. Their iconic beers, the Titan IPA and Yeti Imperial Stout, have cult followings. While their beers are available all over Denver, stop by their brand-new Barrel Bar to try a new style.

What to drink: Yeti Imperial Stout on nitro for malt, caramel and toffee flavors with an extra-smooth finish.

The Newcomers Spangalang Brewery

2736 Welton Street, spangalangbrewery.com
Inspired by the Five Points neighborhood's jazz history, industry vets Darren Boyd, Taylor Rees and Austin Wiley—who cut their teeth developing beers for Great Divide—named their brand-new

brewery after an iconic cymbal rhythm. Their beers circumvent the globe, from a Belgian tripel to an English-American IPA to a German pilsner with Czech hops. The styles are varied, but, says Boyd, “People want what they want!” They don't package their beers, so head to the taproom, where there's always an owner around to help, for a taste.

What to drink: Mic Czech, a toasty, floral pilsner that's a great craft beer introduction.

The Experimental Rockers Ratio Beerworks

2920 Larimer Street, ratiobeerworks.com
Founders Jason zumBrunnen, Zach Lowery and Scott Kaplan bonded over '90s punk bands and beer before brewmaster zumBrunnen learned the ins and



A TASTE OF HEAVEN

On the hunt for a welcoming spot where the meal is as intoxicating as the beer? Second Home, at the **JW MARRIOTT DENVER CHERRY CREEK**, is an urban retreat that's a sensory feast. "The name says it all. We want our guests to feel like our dining room is their home away from home," says General Manager Brandon Wilson. That is, of course, if your home had an award-winning chef and brewer, too.

Through on-site tastings with local brewers, Wilson and his team have hand selected craft beers from across the state to pair with Chef David Anderson's comfort food menu. Favorite combinations include the Couch Potatoes (sweet potato chips with white cheddar sour cream and chive dip) with New Belgium's Fat Tire Amber Ale and the spicy Mile High Meatloaf with Great Divide's Titan IPA. If beer's not your style, check out their wines and craft cocktails, like the Grapefruit A-Go-Go, a mix of vodka, St. Germain, frozen grapefruit spheres, lemon and prosecco. "We work closely with our staff on pairing recommendations to complement everything from chicken and waffles to the catch of the day," Wilson says. In town for the weekend? Don't miss their Sunday Pajama Brunch—or the crowd-pleasing DIY Bloody Mary bar.

outs of brewing. Stints at top Colorado breweries led them to open Ratio in Denver's River North Industrial (RiNo) neighborhood. Five flagship beers are offset by an evolving list of modern twists on global classics, as well as barrel-aged brews and one-off beers cask-conditioned in firkins, which are tapped on Firkin Fridays in Ratio's airy taproom.

What to drink: Dear You, a dry, citrusy saison made with French yeast and American Citra hops.

The IPA Game-Changers

Comrade Brewing
7667 East Iliff Avenue,
comradebrewing.com

Founder David Lin and brewmaster Marks Lanham had the ideal name for the brewery they debuted in 2014. "The beer scene in Denver is all about

camaraderie," says Lin. "So we shortened it to Comrade." Using only American-made equipment, the team focuses on bright, drinkable styles, including the Koffee Kream milk stout and the Superpower IPA, which the *Denver Post* thinks might be the best IPA in Colorado.

What to drink: The Superpower IPA or, if you like a little heat, Yellow Fever, a blonde ale infused with fresh jalapeños.

The Wild Yeast Aficionados

Crooked Stave
3350 Brighton Boulevard,
crookedstave.com

When Chad Yakobson went to Scotland for his master's degree in brewing and distilling, he discovered Brettanomyces, a wild yeast strain that enables funky, sour flavors—the hallmark of

Crooked Stave, the brewery he opened in 2012. The taproom is located in RiNo's artisanal food market, The Source, alongside restaurants, a butcher, a bakery and more. "It's a great place to spend an evening," says Yakobson. It's also a great place to try their unique oak-aged brews, like Persica, a Golden Sour Ale aged with Colorado peaches.

What to drink: Vieille, an artisanal saison aged in oak and lightly dry-hopped for a tropical taste with a tart finish.

The Transplants

Epic Brewing Company
3001 Walnut Street,
epicbrewing.com

Founders Peter Erickson and Dave Cole and brewmaster Kevin Crompton started brewing in Salt Lake City in 2008,

when new laws allowed them to become Utah's first brewery since Prohibition to brew exclusively full-strength beers. "What we brew is cutting-edge, handcrafted and unique. That's what makes us Epic," says Cole. Expanded distribution led them to open a taproom in RiNo, where they have up to 25 draft beers that flaunt their signature bold flavors, like the Fermentation Without Representation Imperial Pumpkin Porter, with spicy clove and Madagascar vanilla giving way to pumpkin, chocolate and malt. Instead of flagship beers, they're constantly mixing up malts, changing hops and swapping out yeast strains to offer tasters something new every time.

What to drink: The Hopulent IPA on nitro, with citrusy notes and a complex malt flavor. ☐