



# HEAD OVER HEELS FOR HOPS

AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE CRAFT BEER MOVEMENT, STONE BREWING FOUNDING PARTNERS GREG KOCH AND STEVE WAGNER GREW THEIR BRAND ORGANICALLY, WITH A FOCUS ON SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY.

BY SUZETTE LIPSCOMB

**W**hen you take a sip of an imperial stout brewed with pecans, wheat and flaked rye, one-quarter aged in bourbon barrels and meant to be paired with oysters on the half shell and licorice ice cream, you know you're dealing with a new brew paradigm. Released in July by Stone Brewing, the Drew Curtis/Wil Wheaton/Greg Koch collaboration of Stone Farking Wheaton Wootstout is what the company describes as a "monster" of a beer, meant to drink fresh or aged at cellar temperature and paired with a new menu of sustainable, ethical options. This is just one in a long line of collaborations between Stone Brewing and actors, rock bands, influencers and people that just love the consistently creative output from a company whose employees almost never leave and whose craft culture, teamwork and collective excitement about beer and local organic food was nurtured by two friends who knew that staying true to their ideals would result not just in a hugely successful business, but also really good beer.

## KINGDOM OF HOPPINESS

In 1996, three years after Greg Koch and Steve Wagner—two musicians who met when Wagner's band rented studio space in Koch's rehearsal studio—took a weekend class at the University of California, Davis called A Sensory Evaluation of Beer, they decided to start a revolution in the beer industry. Originally based in San Marcos, California, they purchased a 30-barrel brewing system that produced 400 barrels that first year and, since then, Stone Brewing (with Koch as executive chairman and Wagner as president and original brew master) has become the ninth-largest craft brewer in the U.S. The company was also listed for 12 years on Inc. magazine's list of America's 500/5,000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies, is distributed in 47 states (plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico), opened the first American craft brewery beer garden in Europe and China and was twice named the "All-time Top Brewery on Planet Earth" by *BeerAdvocate* magazine.

From the start, the founders made radically different decisions than their

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Greg Koch (left) and Steve Wagner; background: Stone Brewing World Bistro & Gardens in Escondido



Left to right: Stone Brewing staff at an annual Stone Anniversary Celebration; the beer gardens in Escondido; Steve Gonzalez, Stone Brewing's senior manager of brewing and innovation

counterparts in the industry by focusing on what was right for themselves, their 1,100 employees, their community (now based in Escondido, California) and their beer. Stone Brewing's impressive year-over-year growth has allowed it to expand by word of mouth: The company has never paid to advertise, nor discounted its beer—two primary techniques used by larger, industrialized beer companies.

With an intense commitment to sustainability, the company, in 2017, had 357 days of zero wastewater discharge to the environment and turned 27 million gallons of brewing byproduct into water for nonpotable processes. Stone Brewing installs solar panels on its buildings (Escondido) and some of its facilities are Leadership for Energy and Environmental Design (LEED Silver certified, such as one in Richmond, Virginia, where goats roam the grounds to tame the landscape. The company also repurposes spent grain for use in the gardens and to make pet treats and soap as well as cattle, goat and chicken feed. As the largest purchaser of organic local produce in San Diego County, Stone Brewing even converts its used fryer oil into New Leaf Biofuel. And the owners put their money where their mouths are. More than \$3.5 million has been donated to charity since day one, with the annual Stone Anniversary Celebration & Invitational Beer Festival responsible for raising more than \$2 million of that total.

For example, in 2006, when the brand built its new brewery, restaurant and gardens in Escondido, Stone asked its fans to sponsor the stones in the wall. Some 472 people participated with the knowledge that they were supporting local charities (more than \$85,000 was raised) and, in return, received bottles of a specially brewed StoneWall Ale, the strongest beer Stone had ever brewed at the time; each bottle bore the names of all the donors.

### EAT, DRINK, REPEAT

If you cannot make it to the Stone Brewing Tap Room in Shanghai, where, in July 2018, Stone became the first independent U.S. brewery to build and open a brewery in China, you can visit the brand's locations in several other cities: Stone Brewing World Bistro & Gardens in Escondido and at Liberty Station in San Diego's Point Loma neighborhood; a brewpub at San Diego International Airport; a brewery in Napa and another in Richmond, Virginia; plus a location in Berlin. Stone also introduced Stone Company Stores in 2011.

At Stone Brewing World Bistro & Gardens in both Escondido and at Liberty Station, the new menu of farm-to-table dishes and craft brew is extensive and the vibe in Escondido is decidedly happy, with children toddling around the grounds as well as parents and couples chilling and wandering amongst the trees, playing cornhole games and meandering in the gardens. It's a great venue for events and weddings or just a nice lunch. Escondido's The Burger will make you want to steal the recipe. Relish the two, 4-ounce patties of 100% organic, grass-fed, dry-aged beef from Belcampo Farms, which is both juicy and flavorful. The charred Brussels sprouts were filled with pancetta nuggets and a sweet Pedro Ximenez sherry glaze. Enjoy the salad of local greens and phyllo-wrapped crusted goat cheese medallions with strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, homemade spiced nuts and sour dried cranberries with a Meyer lemon vinaigrette that is both fresh and filling at the same time.

The beers on tap will make you wish your stomach was large enough to taste them all. The predesigned beer flights allow you to taste an assortment as well as create your own lineup. A crowd pleaser is Notorious P.O.G. Berliner Weisse, a summery fruity beer with Hawaiian roots containing 4.7% alcohol that highlights the flavors of passion fruit, orange and guava. If you like a heavier beer, the Stone Espresso

Totalitarian Imperial Russian Stout is brewed with hundreds of pounds of espresso beans and has a heady, complex coffee flavor that pairs nicely with the stout.

In 1997, the 1-year-old Stone Brewing decided the world was ready for Arrogant Bastard Ale and apparently still cannot get enough of it. Originally, the company produced 45 kegs and 100 cases, which sold out quickly. So the brand made more, and that sold out—and it happened over and over again. Now, in addition to the beer, you can also buy T-shirts and a bag that say, "It's better to be an arrogant bastard than an ignorant one."

Both Koch and Wagner travel frequently and enjoy visiting beer gardens all over the world. We caught Koch on tour with Metallica promoting Enter Night Pilsner and asked him to answer a few questions for *Pacific Coast Magazine*.

**Pacific Coast Magazine:** Your Metallica partnership is setting you apart from the competition. Has music impacted your business?

**Greg Koch:** Absolutely. I've always been inspired by bands that go their own way. Like Metallica did in the beginning of their career, we took a counterculture approach with our own brewery—unleashing beers we knew were too bold for most. We came from the fringes, and now their music and our beer styles are lauded in the mainstream. I never could have guessed that. This collaboration has been eye-opening for me in many ways. Being a band—or a brand—that came from counterculture roots means your fans are incredibly loyal.

**PCM:** What was your initial plan?

**GK:** It was always our plan to do right by our beer, employees and the environment. We did what we believed in and believed would work. We were pretty confident that if we followed this formula, we'd stand out because it was so far from what industrial beer was doing. The bottom line was that Steve and I did what was in our hearts, and we followed our own tastes. We're stoked that others liked it, too.

**PCM:** Regarding your commitment to sustainability, how is it possible to have 357 days of Zero Waste Water Days in a year when you make beer?

**GK:** We've been on the cutting edge of these practices because in Southern California, we can't take water for granted. Water is an integral part of every brewery's beer recipe, so naturally, it's something we're paying close attention to. We use water waste for cooling and cleaning

throughout the brewing process, which saves on nearly all of our discharge.

**PCM:** Your employees told us about the awesome fun and wit of your April Fool's jokes each year. Who plans these tricks?

**GK:** Whoever brings forth the best idea! It has really been a collaborative effort and something we look forward to.

**PCM:** What is your favorite thing to do outside of work?

**GK:** I like to get back to nature as much as possible. That ranges from hiking in the mountains, biking on lonely roads, or just getting my hands dirty in the garden. I also like to visit other cultures and enjoy their food and drink, which means mostly, but not exclusively, their craft/artisanal beer.

**PCM:** What's next for the company? For you?

**GK:** Steve and I are always wanting to improve the lives of the people of Stone and the health and stability of the company. I feel very good about the future and our ability to make things better ... one step, and one beer, at a time. **PC**

Clockwise from left: Stone Brewing's Escondido brewery; a beer flight at Stone Brewing World Bistro & Gardens in Escondido; Fruity Goat salad; The Burger

## ANNIVERSARY ALES

A STONE BREWING ANNIVERSARY ALE HAS BEEN RELEASED FOR THE PAST 23 YEARS. HERE IS THIS YEAR'S VARIETY.



### UNCANNY ANNI DOUBLE IPA

The Stone 23rd Anniversary Uncanny Anni Double IPA is loaded with nine different varieties of hops, including hefty doses of Mosaic, Citra and Cascade.

### TASTING NOTES

**APPEARANCE:** Pale gold with a white creamy foam head

**AROMA:** Peach, tropical fruit and citrus with hop resin. Orange, malty and dank

**TASTE:** Orange, peach, cantaloupe, papaya, melon, pear and grapefruit

**PALATE:** Medium body with a mild sweetness and warming character with integrated, medium bitterness to balance some maltiness and fruit character

**OVERALL:** An Imperial version tribute to Stone Go To IPA, which is being discontinued in 2019. Kris Ketcham, senior manager of brewing and innovation at Liberty Station, brewed this beer on the small scale originally and it was immediately considered for this year's celebratory anniversary beer.

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## STANFIELD SAYS: Here are some of our Stone favorites

**Stone IPA** is the IPA that launched generations of hops fanatics. This **India Pale Ale** is hoppier and higher in content than its little brother pale ale and explodes with tropical, citrusy, piney hop flavors and aromas, all balanced by a subtle malt character.

**Stone Notorious P.O.G.** is a **Berliner weisse** that is fresh, tropical and toasty, yet deeply rich and complex. Few of Stone's favorite beers have gathered the cult-like adoration of this one. Originally brewed in collaboration with comedian/actor Johan Ray, it's a tribute to the passion fruit, orange and guava juice (aka POG) Ray grew up drinking in Hawaii.

Stone debuted its **Arrogant Bastard Ale** in 1997. The "Arrogant" brand split from Stone into its own label, **Arrogant Consortia**, in 2015. The "bastard family of beers," as the company describes it, includes **Oaked Arrogant Bastard Ale, Double Bastard Ale, Depth-Charged Double Bastard Ale, Bourbon Barrel-Aged Arrogant Bastard, Crime, Punishment and Lucky Bastard Ale.**

In September 2018, **Arrogant Consortia** launched **Enter Night Pilsner**, a headbanger-friendly hoppy pilsner brewed in collaboration with Metallica.

**Delicious IPA** is made with Lemondrop and El Dorado hops and crafted to reduce gluten. Like **New Belgium's Glütiny Pale Ale**, Delicious is brewed like a "normal" IPA, then employs an enzyme to reduce gluten content.

