



Bob's Brown Ale

BY KENDALL JONES

HELPING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES HEAL

There is nothing inherently remarkable about brown ale. Most people do not consider it a particularly challenging or adventurous style of beer. Still, Seattle's beer lovers flock to the Nickerson Street Saloon every year on May 14 for the official release of **Bob's Brown Ale**, a bighearted brew from Seattle's **Georgetown Brewing Company**. Founder and brewmaster Manny Chao will be there hoisting a pint of the beer he designed to honor the memory of his friend Bob Hirsch.

Most craft beer fans around Seattle only know one thing about Manny: the beverage bearing his name, **Manny's Pale Ale**, is Seattle's most ubiquitous craft beer. You'll find Manny's on tap at hundreds of pubs, bars and restaurants around Seattle. His name is iconic on the local beer scene. His pale ale is the Space Needle of Seattle craft beer.

What most people don't know is that before the co-founder of Georgetown Brewing Company began formulating what would arguably become "Seattle's beer," Chao worked as a counselor at a camp for kids with cancer. That's where he met a young camper, Hirsch, who would have an indelible impression on him. The two became friends and Chao drew inspiration from the courage with Hirsch fought for his young life.



For years, Hirsch traveled with his family from their home in Alaska for treatment at Seattle Children's Hospital. Like many families with children treated at the hospital, his family stayed at Ronald McDonald House, a home away from home for families facing the direst of circumstances. The philosophy is simple—children heal best and most wholly when their parents are nearby.

Hirsch lost his battle with cancer shortly after his 21st birthday. Soon thereafter, Hirsch's brother suggested that Georgetown Brewing name its next beer after his sibling. Although Chao thought that was a fine idea, he had something better in mind: a philanthropic brew honoring his friend, with the brewery donating all proceeds to the Ronald McDonald House.

Each year on Hirsch's birthday, May 14, Georgetown Brewing releases **Bob's Brown Ale** (draft only). The brewery organizes a few events in addition to the release party, but for the most part the beer does all the work, benefiting the cause with

every pint and pitcher poured. This year Georgetown will brew at least 100 barrels (200 kegs) of Bob's Brown Ale and serve it at 160 locations, mostly pubs and bars in the Puget Sound area.

Unlike most traditional English-style brown ales, which tend to be quite mild and hopless, Georgetown brews Bob's with a Northwest flare. Bob's Brown Ale weighs in at 6.2 percent alcohol by volume and 40 IBUs (International Bitterness Units).

This marks the ninth year of the Bob's Brown Ale project. To date, the beer has raised more than \$330,000 for Ronald McDonald House Charities of Western Washington and Alaska. By the time the 2014 batch runs dry, which usually only takes a few weeks, that number will exceed \$400,000.

"Bob would be proud," Chao says. "Wherever he is, he's grinning big knowing that the beer he inspired is helping so many people and bringing so much pleasure to our beer bellies. Everyone that is involved—from making Bob's, to selling it and drinking it—is giving back to our community. It's pretty dang cool." ●

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