

# Easy Drinking

We've switched things up for our **annual beer awards**—behold, our must-visit list of the best breweries, brewpubs and other hops-driven destinations for Seattle-area beer lovers

BY KENDALL JONES

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALEX CROOK

**I**F YOU FREQUENT ANY BEER-FOCUSED BAR THESE DAYS you've probably noticed that the selection of beers rotates constantly. That's because many beer lovers continually look for something new, something different, something they haven't tried yet.

Like those ever-changing tap lists, our local breweries are responding to this recent shift in consumer habits, and while they may still offer some flagship beers, more and more breweries are expending a lot of energy to create new, limited-release and one-off beers.

Some breweries have a knack for producing a particular type of beer, so instead of judging individual beers that you may never be able to find again, as we've done in the past, this year we polled 36 local beer experts to determine the best brewery in each of seven different style categories. Whatever style of beer you crave, we've done all the heavy lifting so that you don't have to. Below we direct you to breweries that are sure to fix your beer jones.

**Methodology:** Our panel of beer experts included certified beer judges, bar owners, bottle-shop owners, beer writers and other beer savvy individuals. Panelists were invited to vote anonymously for their favorite brewery in each style category with one restriction: Only Washington breweries creating beers that are available around the Seattle area were eligible. In most cases, a clear winner was easily established. When necessary, we circled back and asked them to vote on a set of finalists until we determined a top brewery in each style category.

#### SHORT PUNCH

Fremont Brewing took home the award for Best Barrel-aged Beer and also Best Dark Beers. Or do we not want to giev this way here?







#### BEST NON-HAZY IPAs

Sometimes referred to as Northwest IPA or West Coast IPA, this style of beer offers lots of hops flavor without the hazy appearance

## Georgetown Brewing Company

#### ► MOST BEER DRINKERS

around here are familiar with Manny's pale ale, Georgetown's flagship beer, but this brewery also pumps out other world-class offerings, including our panel's favorite non-hazy IPAs. Stop by the brewery's taproom, where you'll often find three or four new, limited-release IPAs to tickle your palate. These are actually experimental beers, intended to help develop new recipes that may become regular offerings, like the delightfully fruity and refreshingly bitter Lucille IPA, which you'll always find at your local grocery store in 12-ounce cans. *Georgetown, 5200 Denver Ave. S; 206.766.8055; georgetown-beer.com; all ages; dog-friendly*

**RUNNER UP** Reuben's Brews, Ballard, 5010 14th Ave. NW; 206.784.2859; reubensbrews.com; all ages; dog-friendly

#### CLEAR AS DAY

Pick up a six-pack of Georgetown Brewing Company's Lucille IPA at your local beer retailer to enjoy this fruity, bitter beverage at home

#### BEST HAZY IPAs

A very popular style currently, these beers are brewed with a touch of wheat and/or oats, which lends the beer a hazy, turbid appearance. Hoppy like an IPA, but usually with a fruitier, juicier flavor profile

## SKOOKUM BREWERY

► **THIS MIGHT BE THE BEST BREWERY** you've never heard of. It's located about 45 miles north of Seattle, where the spacious taproom is decorated with a random, mismatched collection of kitchen tables and chairs. Try all of Skookum's beers, but make sure you take one of the hazy IPAs for a spin, like the Glow Inc. IPA, a draft-only beer that you'll often find at the brewery's taproom and occasionally at better beer bars around the Seattle area. *Arlington, 17925 59th Ave. NE; 360.403.7094; skookumbrewery.com; 21 and older; dog-friendly*

**RUNNER UP** Cloudburst Brewing, downtown, 2116 Western Ave.; cloudburstbrew.com; 21 and older; dog-friendly

#### MISMATCH

Arlington's Skookum Brewery is worth the trek out of town, as much for the patchwork decor as the hazy IPAs

#### BEST BREWERY TAPROOM FOR YOUR POOCH

### POSTDOC BREWING

► **CONVENIENTLY LOCATED** at the east entrance to Redmond's Marymoor Park, home to one of the region's largest off-leash areas, this all-ages taproom welcomes your pup both inside and on the patio. Along with the beer, there is often a food truck in the parking lot for human visitors; for Bowser and Fifi, there's always a selection of healthy doggie snacks made with the same grains the brewery uses to brew the beer. *Redmond, 17625 NE 65th St., No. 100; 425.658.4963; postdocbrewing.com; all ages; dog-friendly*







#### SCHOOL'S OUT

The old school vibe, cold pints and approachable pub grub make this classic spot near the University of Washington an evergreen favorite

#### BEST BREWPUB

A restaurant or pub with its own brewery on-site

## BIG TIME BREWERY AND ALEHOUSE

scientific researchers, all slurping down pints of the beloved Scarlet Fire IPA alongside pizzas, sandwiches and other pub grub.

There is something truly nostalgic here. Wood floors, large oak library-style tables and a beautiful antique back bar complement modern, award-winning beers. About four years ago, one of the bartenders, Rick McLaughlin, became the owner and is now a pillar of the business community, advocating for the rights of small businesses that face an army of challenges as Seattle charges into the future. In a city where everything is shiny and new, Big Time Brewery and Alehouse endures. To quote *Field of Dreams*, "It reminds us of all that once was good, and it could be again." *University District*, 4133 University Way NE; 206.545.4509; [bigtimebrewery.com](http://bigtimebrewery.com); all ages before 8 p.m., 21 and older thereafter; no dogs

#### READERS' CHOICE

**Big Time Brewery and Alehouse**, University District, 4133 University Way NE; 206.545.4509; [bigtimebrewery.com](http://bigtimebrewery.com); all ages before 8 p.m., 21 and older thereafter; no dogs

**The Pike Pub**, downtown, 1415 First Ave.; 206.622.6044; [pikebrewing.com](http://pikebrewing.com); all ages; no dogs

**Redhook Brewlab**, Capitol Hill, 714 E Pike St.; 206.823.3026; [redhook.com](http://redhook.com); all ages; dogs welcome on the front and back patios

#### BEST BEER RETAILER

A place to savor a pint or take some bottles or growlers to go

## Full Throttle Bottles

➤ **FULL THROTTLE BOTTLES**, opened in 2008, was one of the first dedicated beer stores in Seattle. By 2016, the Georgetown shop was getting a bit long in the tooth. That's when a change of ownership and a change in direction infused new energy into the business. The space was cleaned up and remodeled, and the store reimagined to better serve the crowds along the now-bustling strip of restaurants and nightspots on Airport Way. Patrons are now invited to have a seat and enjoy a pint while perusing the coolers for beers to go.

Other bottle shops around Seattle may boast a larger selection, but owner Jon Olken focuses on a carefully curated collection of beers, including familiar favorites from locals such as Georgetown Brewing Company and Fremont Brewing, along with less common, ultrarare gems from breweries like De Garde Brewing of Tillamook, Oregon. The 12 taps reflect a similar diversity at this friendly little beer boutique. *Georgetown*, 5909 Airport Way S; 206.763.2079; [fullthrottlebottles.com](http://fullthrottlebottles.com); 21 and older; dog-friendly

#### READERS' CHOICE

**Chuck's Hop Shop (Greenwood)**, Greenwood, 656 NW 85th St.; 206.297.6212; [chuckshopshop.com](http://chuckshopshop.com); all ages; dog-friendly

**The Beer Junction**, West Seattle, 4511 California Ave. SW; 206.938.2337; [thebeerjunction.com](http://thebeerjunction.com); 21 and older; no dogs

**Full Throttle Bottles**, Georgetown, 5909 Airport Way S; 206.763.2079; [fullthrottlebottles.com](http://fullthrottlebottles.com); 21 and older; dog-friendly



#### BARREL THIEF

Holy Mountain Brewing Company owners Colin Lenfesty (left) and Mike Murphy stand amidst the oak barrels used to age their beers

#### BEST SAISON (FARMHOUSE-STYLE) BEERS

Originally brewed at farmhouses in France and Belgium, this style of beer is noted for its fruity and spicy character

## Holy Mountain Brewing Company

➤ **THIS BREWERY BLENDS THE OLD WORLD** with the new to create saisons that are rustic (as though they were brewed in a barn) and refined (as though they were brewed using modern technology). Many of its beers are aged in wood (in oak barrels, for instance)

to add layers of flavor complexity. The Seer saison—available in the fall, one of a rotating four-brew series—is a great example, presenting a cornucopia of flavors such as lemon, pine, wheat and honey. It can be found at bottle shops around Seattle in 750-milliliter bottles. Stop by the brewery's tasting room to see what more uncommon creations it might have on tap. *Interbay*, 1421 Elliott Ave. W; [holymountainbrewing.com](http://holymountainbrewing.com); 21 and older; no dogs allowed

**RUNNER UP Garden Path Fermentation**; Burlington, 11653 Higgins Airport Way; 360.503.8956; [gardenpathwa.com](http://gardenpathwa.com); 21 and older only; dog-friendly





**FRUIT FORWARD**  
The fruited sour beers at Urban Family Brewing Company, brewed with tropical and stone fruits, are crowd favorites

**BEST SOUR BEERS (WILD-FERMENTED, MIXED CULTURE)**  
Less common but increasingly popular, these beers are intentionally tart and often fruity, overturning many preconceived notions of how beer is supposed to taste

## URBAN FAMILY BREWING COMPANY

► **MAGNOLIA'S LOSS WILL BE BALLARD'S GAIN** as Urban Family Brewing prepares to move across the Ship Canal to a new, larger home in Ballard later this year, returning to the neighborhood where it first opened as a tiny brewery and pub in 2012 before moving south in 2015. The current location will remain open until the move is completed. Local beer lovers are smitten with the fruited sour beers, puckering up for the likes of Sun Seeker, brewed with a blend of tropical and stone fruits, available

on tap and in 750-milliliter bottles at the brewery's taproom. Sour beers age at their own, unpredictable pace and cannot be rushed; always keep an eye out for Urban Family's Reserve Series beers, which will be ready when they're ready. *Magnolia, 4441 26th Ave. W; 206.946.8533; urbanfamilybrewing.com; all ages; dog-friendly*

**RUNNER UP Engine House No. 9;** Tacoma; 611 N Pine St.; 253.272.3435; *ehouse9.com; all ages; no dogs*

### BEST BREWERY TAPROOM

Brewery with a taproom serving tasters and pints and isn't a brewpub or restaurant

## Stoup Brewing

► **WHAT SETS THIS BREWERY TAPROOM APART** from the many others in Ballard is the different types of spaces it offers. The main taproom, immediately adjacent to the stainless steel brewing equipment and beer-loaded oak barrels, is always crowded and energetic, with a garage door that opens to a small patio out front; that's where you'll often find a food truck at dinnertime. Outside, on the west side of the building, the beer garden offers elbow room, picnic tables and Adirondack chairs beneath suspended shade-casting sails. Upstairs, you'll find a separate bar where beers are poured in a quieter, adults-only space overlooking the beer garden.

Among the many design elements lending ambiance to the otherwise industrial space, notice the wall-mounted light fixtures near the bathrooms: They're bottle-cap chandeliers that Lara Zahaba, one of the owners, found in Austin, Texas. The array of lights is mesmerizing, and so are the medal-winning beers, like the robust porter, Stoup Brewing's most highly decorated beer. *Ballard, 1108 NW 52nd St.; 206.457.5524; stoupbrewing.com; all ages (except upstairs); dog-friendly*



### THREE'S A CROWD

Stoup Brewing co-owners (from left) Brad Benson, Robyn Schumacher and Lara Zahaba have created a warm, welcoming space to enjoy their excellent beers in Ballard

### READERS' CHOICE

**Reuben's Brews,** Ballard, 5010 14th Ave. NW; 206.784.2859; *reubensbrews.com; all ages; dog-friendly*

**Holy Mountain Brewing Company,** Interbay, 1421 Elliott Ave. W; *holymountainbrewing.com; 21 and older; no dogs*

**Flying Bike Cooperative Brewery,** Greenwood, 8570 Greenwood Ave. N; 206.428.7709; *flyingbike.coop; all ages; dog-friendly*

### BEST BEER-FOCUSED BAR

At least 12 beers on tap, rotating regularly; bar only, no food

## BEVERIDGE PLACE PUB

► **FOR OVER 15 YEARS**, Beveridge Place Pub has combined the coziness of a neighborhood pub with the beer list of a world-class beer bar. Owner Gary Sink and his beer-savvy crew consistently offer a rotating draft list that is 32 beers deep and chock-full of beloved local favorites, such as Crikey IPA from Reuben's Brews, as well as eclectic offerings from Europe and beyond. Beer geeks from across the region flock to the pub's annual special events, like the Fresh Hop Festival (October), Barleywine Bacchanal (January) and Seattle Cask-O-Rama (May).

The pub's front room is filled with couches, large family-size tables, and a huge, beautiful antique bar. The back room is where you'll find darts, foosball and a flat-screen television showing sports (especially European soccer). On an important game day, you might find Sink, a former UW football player, wearing his jersey and championship ring from the 1982 Rose Bowl. And while you're enjoying the game, order some food from one of the nearby restaurants, many of which deliver to your table. *West Seattle, 6413 California Ave. SW; 206.932.9906; beveridgeplacepub.com; 21 and older; dog-friendly*

### READERS' CHOICE

**Chuck's Hop Shop (Greenwood),** Greenwood, 656 NW 85th St.; 206.297.6212; *chuckshopshop.com; all ages; dog-friendly*

**Beveridge Place Pub,** West Seattle, 6413 California Ave. SW; 206.932.9906; *beveridgeplacepub.com; 21 and older; dog-friendly*

**The Beer Junction,** West Seattle, 4511 California Ave. SW; 206.938.2337; *thebeerjunction.com; 21 and older only; no dogs*

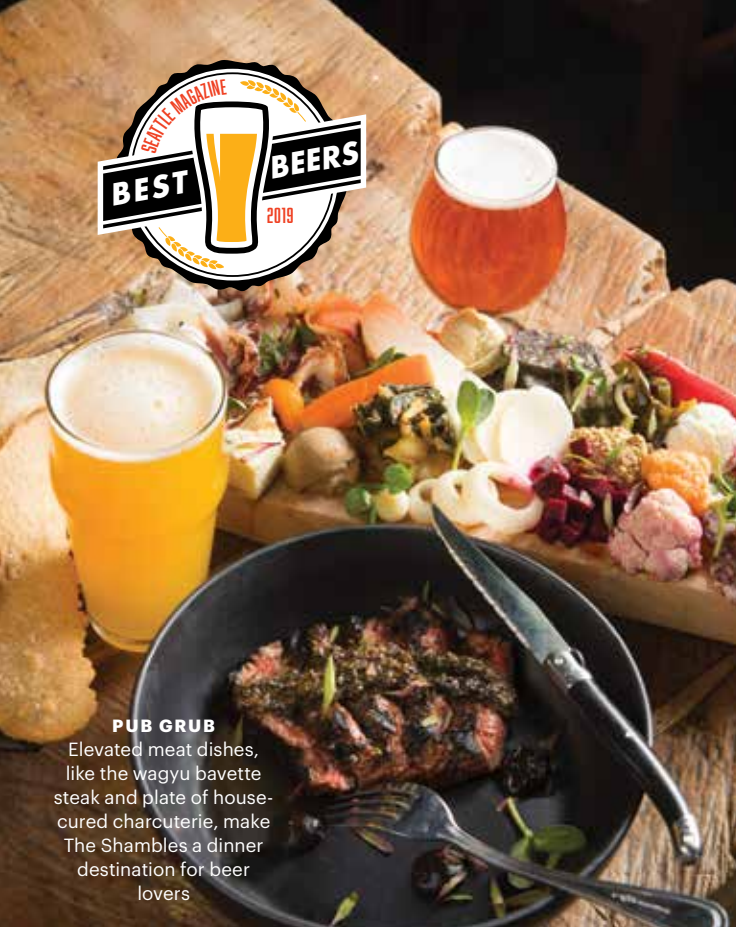
### BEST BREWERY TAPROOM FOR A FIRST DATE

## TWO BEERS BREWING CO., THE WOODS TAPROOM

► **IN ADDITION TO** brewing beer, this company also produces cider (Seattle Cider Company) and spiked seltzer (Sound Craft Seltzer Co.), so when you arrive here with that special someone—who isn't a beer lover—there are options. Also, this is a grown-ups-only establishment (21 and older), so there won't be any rambunctious children around to break the mood. Spacious, but with cozy nooks and corners for privacy, the space is furnished with heavy wood and steel tables spread out beneath suspended, custom-made barrel lamps that provide mood lighting. *SoDo, 4700 Ohio Ave. S; 206.762.0490; twobeersbrewery.com; 21 and older; dog-friendly*







#### PUB GRUB

Elevated meat dishes, like the wagyu bavette steak and plate of house-cured charcuterie, make The Shambles a dinner destination for beer lovers

#### BEST BEER-FOCUSED RESTAURANT

A restaurant or pub with a strong focus on beer

## THE SHAMBLES

► **NAMED AFTER A HISTORIC BUTCHERY DISTRICT**

in York, England, The Shambles is a self-described butcher shop and bar, but that description is incomplete. Yes, there is a meat case with house-smoked, -cured and -butchered meats (eventually the owners hope to produce enough to sell it to go), and yes there is a rotating selection of 32 draft beers, along with wine and cocktails. But the meals cranked out by the kitchen are beyond drool-worthy. The menu changes based on the meat available, but don't miss the house meat board, piled with house-made charcuterie, for \$12. When available, the 10-ounce wagyu bavette (\$36) is a decadent treat.

The Shambles is located in a single-story brick building, with large windows facing the street. The interior is reminiscent of an old English pub with lots of oak decor and millwork, and sturdy oak pillars bolster arched eaves. Keep an eye on the large bookcase; try to guess which book opens the secret door to the beer fridge. *Maple Leaf, 7777 15th Ave. NE; 206.659.0074; delimeatsbar.com; 21 and older; no dogs*

#### READERS' CHOICE

**Brouwer's Cafe**, Fremont, 400 N 35th St.; 206.267.2437; brouwerscafe.com; 21 and older only; no dogs

**The Shambles**, Maple Leaf, 7777 15th Ave. NE; 206.659.0074; delimeatsbar.com; 21 and older; no dogs

**The Pine Box**, Capitol Hill, 1600 Melrose Ave.; 206.588.0375; pineboxbar.com; 21 and older; no dogs

#### MOST ICONIC WASHINGTON BEER BRAND

The pioneers

## Hale's Ales

► **AMERICA IS NOW FRECKLED** with more than 7,000 small, independent craft breweries, and Seattle's Hale's Ales brewery was one of the first dozen. Mike Hale built his original brewery in Colville in 1983, hoping to emulate the beers he'd tasted while visiting England that he simply could not find in America at the time. After relocating to Spokane and then to Kirkland, Hale's Ales found its forever home on NW Leary Way in Ballard, where the brewery and pub have served the community since 1995. Today, the kitchen at the brewery's pub is operated by El Camión, of local food truck fame.

Like his brewery, Hale wears those years well: He's a tall, smiling, soft-spoken, omnipresent fixture on the local beer scene who seems completely unimpressed by his own amazing accomplishments. For decades, Hale's Pale American Ale, one of the brewery's original beers, has endured because it is a clear reflection of Hale himself: It isn't complicated or overpowering, just delicious and easy to enjoy. If you see a red London-style double-decker bus tooling around Ballard, know that Mike Hale is probably behind the wheel. *Ballard, 4301 Leary Way NW; 206.782.0737; halesbrewery.com; all ages; no dogs*

#### CHEERIO

Mike Hale has built a name synonymous with simple, easy-drinking beers



#### READERS' CHOICE

**Rainier Brewing Company**, no local brewery or tasting room

**Georgetown Brewing Company**, Georgetown, 5200 Denver Ave. S; 206.766.8055; georgetownbeer.com; all ages; dog-friendly

**Pike Brewing Company**, downtown, 1415 First Ave.; 206.622.6044; pikebrewing.com; all ages; no dogs

#### BEST BREWERY FOR A POST-HIKE BEER

## NO BOAT BREWING COMPANY

► **LOCATED JUST A FEW MILES** off Interstate 90 at Snoqualmie Ridge, this brewery and all-ages taproom offers a refreshing detour after a hike on Mount Si, Rattlesnake Ridge, Mailbox Peak or one of the many other nearby trails. On weekends, the beer garden, which is actually a very cleverly disguised parking lot, is often crowded with people shaking off dirt from the trail as they slurp brews after hiking. Reach for a Snoqualmie Maybe pale ale, a mild yet tasty, easy-drinking treat, after you've left it all out there on the trail. Pair that with something from whatever food truck happens to be there and reflect on the day's adventure. *Snoqualmie, 35214 SE Center St., No. 2; 425.292.0702; noboatbrewing.com; all ages; dog-friendly*



#### BEST LAGERS

The term "lager" describes a number of different styles, but what they all have in common is time; they're slowly fermented in a cold setting and conditioned for several weeks, at least, to smooth out the flavors

## CHUCKANUT BREWERY

► **THIS BELLINGHAM-BASED BREWERY IS PERHAPS** the most highly esteemed producer of traditional European-style lagers in the United States. Its beers have won dozens of medals at the world's most prestigious beer competitions. No wonder our panel selected it, almost unanimously, as the best lager-focused brewery. Chuckanut Brewery & Kitchen in Bellingham is a full-service brewpub, while the satellite location in Burlington is a brewery and taproom (no food). Look for Chuckanut pilsner in 22-ounce bottles at better grocery stores and beer retailers, or visit one of brewery's locations for a broad selection of world-class lagers. *Chuckanut Brewery & Kitchen; Bellingham, 601 W Holly St.; 360.752.3377; chuckanutbreweryandkitchen.com; all ages; no dogs. Chuckanut Brewery & Tap Room; Burlington, 11937 Higgins Airport Way; 360.752.3377; chuckanutbreweryandkitchen.com; all ages; dogs on patio only*

**RUNNER UP Chainline Brewing Company**, Kirkland, 503 Sixth St. S; 425.242.0923; chainlinebrew.com; all ages; dog-friendly



#### SO SMOOTH

A selection of Chuckanut Brewery's lagers can be found at better groceries and beer retailers, but you'll have to travel to the Bellingham brewery location for the excellent Reuben sandwich





**WINNER WINNER**  
Sara Nelson, co-owner  
of Fremont Brewing,  
where you'll find some  
of the finest barrel-aged  
and dark beers

### BEST BARREL-AGED BEER

*These highly coveted beers spend time aging in oak barrels. Most often, those containers are repurposed wine or liquor barrels, which add character and, in some cases, alcohol content to the beer*

## FREMONT BREWING

➤ **ACCORDING TO OUR PANEL** of experts, the state's largest producer of barrel-aged beer is also the best. It's not uncommon for a brewery to take one of its existing beers, like a stout or a porter, and age it in a barrel, but Fremont Brewing's most coveted creations are designed specifically for barrel aging. These are not barrel-aged versions of existing beers; rather, they are engineered from the get-go for time in the barrel, whether it be a whiskey barrel or a wine barrel. Lovers of big, bodacious brews should mark November 29 on their calendars: At the brewery's Urban Beer Garden, Black Friday is known as B-Bomb Friday, the day when the brewery releases its most ballyhooed winter ale (B-Bomb), a dark, strong and complex beer lovingly aged for many months in bourbon barrels. *Fremont, 1050 N 34th St.; 206.420.2407; fremontbrewing.com; all ages; dog-friendly*

**RUNNER UP** Holy Mountain Brewing Company, Interbay, 1421 Elliott Ave. W; holymountainbrewing.com; 21 and older; no dogs allowed

### BEST DARK BEERS (STOUTS, PORTERS)

*Two very traditional English-style beers that are dark, in most cases opaque, and feature lots of rich malt character*

## FREMONT BREWING

➤ **THE BREWERY'S REGULAR**, year-round lineup only includes one big beer, but it's a very good one, Dark Star imperial oatmeal stout. Beyond that, Fremont frequently introduces limited-release beers that are big, burly and dark as night. Many of its most opaque and boldest beers are released during the darker months, but Dark Star is always available and always satisfies, with hints of coffee and chocolate in a silky-smooth beer. It's uncommon that such a robust beer finds its way into a 12-ounce can, but nobody ever accused Fremont Brewing of being normal. *Fremont, 1050 N 34th St.; 206.420.2407; fremontbrewing.com; all ages; dog-friendly*

**RUNNER UP** Skookum Brewery; Arlington, 17925 59th Ave. NE; skookumbrewery.com; 21 and older; dog-friendly

### Best Neighborhood for Beer Touring

## BALLARD

**BEER LOVERS CALL IT THE BALLARD BREWERY DISTRICT.** Nobody keeps track of these things, but it probably represents the highest density of breweries of any neighborhood in the world. Eleven breweries currently call Ballard home, and at least one more is on the way as Urban Family Brewing Company plans to open right across the street from Stoup Brewing and Obec Brewing by year's end. Most of these breweries are located on the east side of the neighborhood, not more than a block or two away from each other, which makes it easy to stroll from one to the next.

As you wander the streets on a Saturday afternoon, you'll have company; urban beer hiking in Ballard is a real thing, and you'll find healthy crowds at most of the taprooms, especially at Reuben's Brews, on 14th Avenue NW, and Stoup Brewing, on NW 52nd Street, perhaps the two most popular brewery destinations in the neighborhood. All but one taproom, Obec Brewing, welcomes kids, and many of the breweries regularly host food trucks to keep you nourished on your trek.

### BEST NEWBIE OF THE YEAR

## FUTURE PRIMITIVE BREWING COMPANY

➤ **WHITE CENTER'S CRAWL** toward gentrification continues with the addition of this highly anticipated new brewery, located in the former

home of Big Al Brewing. After giving a massive face-lift to the property, which included the installation of a new, state-of-the-art brewing system and a complete reimagining of the taproom, Future Primitive opened in December 2018. The ownership group includes some local beer-industry nobility: Dean Hudgins and Ian Roberts, owners of The Pine Box (our Best Beer-focused Restaurant in 2018); Mike Baker, a distributor of imported European beers; and Kevin Watson, a native of White Center who brewed for many years at Elysian Brewing.

From the large beer garden and covered deck out front to the designated kids' play area upstairs, Future Primitive Brewing fires on all cylinders. It even has its own food truck parked out front. Offering Central European cuisine, it's actually a food trailer operated on afternoons and evenings by the same people who run Good Day Donuts. As for the beer, brewmaster Kevin Watson puts his experience to good use, creating a range of beers to appeal to all palates, such as the Green River IPA, which has thus far emerged as the brewery's flagship beer. *White Center, 9832 14th Ave. SW; futureprimitivebeer.com; all ages; dog-friendly* 📍

### MOTLEY CREW

Future Primitive Brewing Company's ownership group is an impressive assortment of beer industry legends: (clockwise from top left) Dean Hudgins, Mike Baker, Larry Solomon, Ian Roberts and Kevin Watson

