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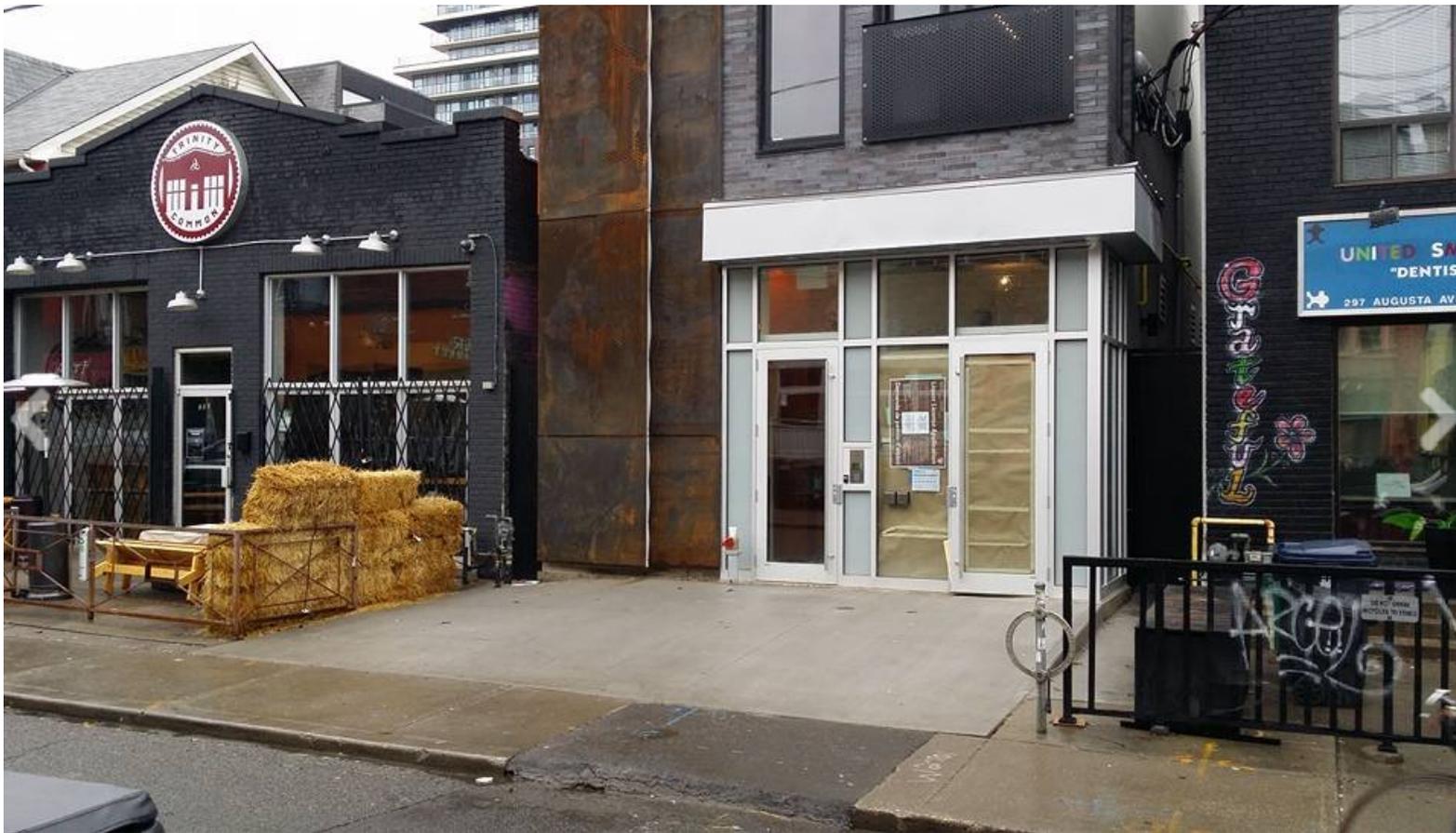
Kensington Market's first brewery, Kensington Brewing Company, opening in May

With Duggan's Brewery and Collective Arts eyeing locations in Kensington, could Toronto's most distinctive neighbourhood be the next craft beer hub?

BY **MICHELLE DA SILVA**

MAY 8, 2017 4:01 PM





A number of breweries are slated to open in Kensington Market along Augusta, starting with Kensington Brewing Company next to Trinity Commons.



When **Kensington Brewing Company** opens its doors at 299 Augusta at the end of this month, it'll be a monumental moment for the five-year-old brewery. Launched as a house brand in the back of the now-gone Burger Bar by Brock Shepherd, it's taken the company more than four years to expand into their own production brewery, tap room and bottle shop. By June, they'll have all three, and they will be **Kensington Market's** first brewery.

The space they're in is long and narrow. Formerly a theatre, then a skate shop and most recently the

home of Bread & Circus bar, the now redeveloped building has residential apartments above it. Kensington Brewing occupies the street-level and basement floors, which has made constructing a brew house particularly challenging.

“We don’t own the building so the space was developed with a lot of coordination with the landlord,” says Michael Gurr, Kensington Brewing’s vice president of operations. “There was a lot of construction, a lot of delays with zoning and permitting, and for two years after we acquired the space, nothing happened. It was kind of a dead site.”

But when NOW toured the location at the end of April, things were looking up. The brewing tanks were newly installed, and the construction of bathrooms, a bottle shop, a poured-concrete bar and communal tables was being finalized.

“Brewing beer takes three or four weeks to produce, so we’ll start brewing next week and it will be ready by the end of May,” Gurr explains.

The tap room will have a 40-person capacity and a 20-person patio out front, which they anticipate will be finished by mid-summer pending approval.

The focal point of the room is the production brewery, a collection of five stainless steel tanks that will produce 1,500 litres of beer at a time. A mechanical hoist helps lift bottles and kegs from the basement, a replacement for forklifts typically found in warehouses.

While the company has primarily focused on their Fisheye IPA and Market Pilsner in recent years, they’re looking to expand with more experimental offerings. This summer, they’ll introduce new pale ale, sour and saison styles. They’ll also have a new logo and bottle packaging at the time of launch.

“We’re rebranding and getting back to where it all started, which is food. The inspiration for us is the Market and the surrounding food, restaurants and bars,” says Gurr. “Part of that means pairing beer and food in interesting ways, but also offering beer and food education, cooking classes and seminars.”

They’re currently working with **Sanagan’s Meat Locker**, just around the corner, to discuss a beer and

butchery demo. And while they don't have a kitchen to produce food, they're planning to serve prepared charcuterie boards from Sanagan's, sandwiches and other cold snacks. They're also donating a portion of sales of Kensington Brewing's merchandise to benefit meals served at St. Stephen's Community House across the street.



In addition to their IPA and pilsner, Kensington Brewing Company will launch new a new pale ale, sour and saison this summer.

While Kensington Brewing is slated to be the first brewery to open, they won't be the last. Michael Duggan, owner and brewmaster of Parkdale's popular **Duggan's Brewery**, is part of a new venture, also launching in Kensington Market.

"It's called B2B (Beer to Beer), which will have a small brewery on premise," confirms. "That's what I am responsible for, so it's kind of a Duggan's, but not exactly."

With brewing equipment already on site at 319 Augusta, Duggan hopes to be open by summer.

Coincidentally, that location, where Kensington Pop-Up currently lives, used to house Burger Bar. The former restaurant was owned by none other than Kensington Brewery's founder Shepherd, who took an interest in craft beer at the time.

"I turned it into a craft beer joint and started rotating taps," Shepherd recalls. "Eventually, I looked into getting our own beer made and started Kensington Brewing Company."

While Shepherd is no longer with the brewery, he's still involved in beer. Earlier this year, he launched an event at Wynchwood Barns called **Trashed & Wasted**, which encouraged participating restaurants to create dishes from typically discarded ingredients, such as animal skins and the odd ends of produce. There was a liquor component, with **spirits made from whey** leftover from cheese making and beer created from leftover bread.

This summer, he'll bring Trashed & Wasted to Kensington Market in the form of a flea market during **Pedestrian Sundays**. The first one takes place June 25 behind El Gordo Fine Foods (214 Augusta), with plans to pop up once a month.

"It's a unique backyard space that I'm renting from them, and I'm adding a beer component as well," says Shepherd, adding that each beer garden will be themed. "One of them will be out-of-town breweries that aren't represented here. Another, will hopefully be Kensington breweries."

He says that in addition to Kensington Brewing and Duggan's project, **Collective Arts Brewing** based out of Hamilton has been seeking out space.

"They've secured the spot in the old Zimmerman's Freshmart space [241 Augusta] just north of Baldwin, but it's all conditional to them getting approval from the city," Shepherd explains. "When I was dealing with Kensington, that took a long time, but hopefully we paved the way to make it easier for them." (A spokesperson for Collective Arts stated that plans to open in Kensington Market are "still in discussion").

Gurr has also heard news about Collective Arts and Duggan's, and is excited by the news. He hopes Kensington Market grows into a craft beer hub, calling the neighbourhood "a natural fit for breweries."

“There’s been a big shift around here the past 10 years, a lot of younger local artisans who are picking up the torch from the old Kensington, but I think we’re doing things in new and interesting ways,” he says. “Our brewery is staying true to the **values of Kensington Market**, which are community, quality and small business.”

Shepherd adds that beer-focused restaurants such as Trinity Commons, which boasts over 30 brews on taps, helps diversify the neighbourhood’s offerings. With at least two breweries slated to open soon, it will make Kensington a beer destination.

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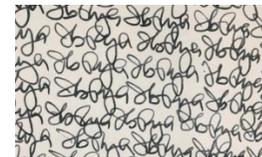
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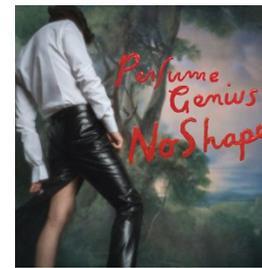
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