

Love What You Love Podcast

Episode 30: Home Brewing with Matt Hunsworth

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Hey, I'm Julie Rose. Welcome to *Love What You Love*. I'm an author, creator, and enthusiast, and I've always been intrigued by the things that people are super into, so every week I'll introduce you to another fascinating human who's into really interesting stuff.

Welcome back! Or, Welcome! I hope you've been able to find some pockets of joy and light this month. With today's solstice, the light is returning! And I don't have to tell you that that is some serious cause for celebration.

The podcast is going to be on a break the first two weeks of January. As a reminder, we'll have one more episode next week before the year is out. Also, don't forget to subscribe to the podcast wherever you might be listening so you don't miss it when we come back in January. With all of that out of the way, let's meet this week's guest.

Matt Hunsworth has been brewing his own beer at home for over five years. Well enough, in fact, to earn medals in brewing competitions, and he's now qualified as a judge for brewing competitions as well. In this conversation, we talk voracious yeast, bitters that aren't actually bitter, why '99 bottles of beer' is actually pretty accurate, beer in the apocalypse, and so much more. Find out why Matt loves brewing beer at home, and why you might learn to love it too.

Julie: Hello, Matt! Thank you so much for joining me today!

Matt: Thank you for having me!

Julie: I am really excited to talk with you because you... I'm not sure what the correct terminology is, but you do home brewing. You brew your own beer, is that right?

Matt: Yes, that's right, and that's the best way to say it. No-pro, and everything I've cobbled together is in my garage. You can't get any more brewing-in-the-home than that, I don't think.

Julie: Now, when did you actually start brewing your own beer, and what brought you to that? What was the impulse behind starting to brew your own beer?

Matt: I'm going to say... I wish I knew the exact date, but it's somewhere around five or six years ago, somewhere in that range. And it's something I always wanted to try to do but I didn't really understand at all how you *could* do it at home. And I think what... in fact I know, actually, what kind of drove me to finally try to learn and see how it's done was the rapid growth of breweries here in Orlando. That's where I've been living for the past 23, 24 years now. And we're always... being a tourist town and somewhat transient town, we're always late to the trend, so our craft brewery explosion happened a few years after everybody else's.

Once it started happening, and we visited breweries, and I started to see the process in the making as opposed to a big factory like Anheuser-Busch, in a commercial setting of some sort, things started to make sense. I'm like, "Okay, I can kind of understand how this can be done on a smaller scale, so let me try it." And once I tried it, it was like... It was, and has been, and still is, my most fun hobby I have picked up in a ridiculously extensive list of hobbies I've started throughout my whole life.

Julie: [laughs] So you're a person who sees something and you're like, "I can try that. I want to try that."

Matt: Yeah. And I was always intimidated by this one because of the whole chemistry, and I just didn't understand how it worked. But finally seeing it on, like I said, a smaller scale in several places, I'm like, "Okay, I'm starting to get it. Let me figure this out." And I wish I'd started years and years ago because it's been so much fun. But it's one of those things, honestly, where I tell myself, "Better late than never."

Julie: Now, is it the process, or is it the final result that you like? Or is it both?

Matt: It's both. And I would say, it's the in-between that I hate, because you're cleaning in between. So yeah, it's the process and then the final result, and everything else I do just to get to the next process or next end result.

Julie: Like, generally, what is the process of brewing beer at home?

Matt: Yeah, I can walk you through it pretty simply. It starts off with... I'm going to talk about all-grain because that's what I do. There's two methods; there's extract and there's all-grain, and the only real... There's no difference in the end result but there's a difference in the process. All-grain, you are, in a sense, making your own extracts, so it's going to cover all the bases theoretically. But you would start by... Well, you build your recipe, of course, like you would with anything you're cooking. Get all your ingredients or pieces in a row for any kind of chemistry because you're kind of doing both.

You start off by picking your malts, generally, and that is a form of wheat and barley that's started to bud but not quite get an actual flower or root going because at that point in their life cycle is where the most starches that are convertible into sugar are made. So, you're going to grind those up, you're going to add those to hot water, that's where you're in the step called mashing in. That hot water is now converting those starches to sugars. And there's a whole range as well, from about 140° to 160°, and you can even play with that range as well and you get different results. So your recipe calls on what kind of sugars you want to convert those starches into. That's part of the process as well.

But once you've done that, regardless of what temperature you're doing, you now have your sweet wort, or in this case, your extract. So you have a bunch of sugar water that, believe me, if you dump over that boil kettle gets sticky really fast. But I'm not going to tell those stories. [laughs] Then from there, you're going to boil that wort. And again, for the example I'll say we're going to boil it for an hour but it all depends on what your end result is going to be. Again, you're doing various chemical things here.

Now you're going to be adding your hops, and the hops are going to do several things. They're going to add flavor, they're going to add aroma, they're going to add preservative effects. The earlier you add them the more isomerization you're going to be adding to your beer. That usually, for intents and purposes, creates a bittering quality, and the later you add them towards the end of the boil is where you get more of a floral, citrus, hoppy flavor. So depending on what you want to do, again what you want the end result to be, it depends on how long you're going to boil, but let's say 60 minutes... and you've also chemically reduced your sugar water. You've evaporated your water. There's no real mystery to that.

So you now have more sugar for your yeast to then convert into alcohol. And that's the next step you're at, you're going to get that boiled down to whatever temperature...

You certainly want to get it well out of boiling range because you're going to kill your yeast; they are living organisms. So let's say in this example, we want to get down to about 70°F, and at that point you add your yeast, and you... You've actually... What's the word... Brewers create wort... That's what that is called. An unfermented beer is called a wort. So, brewers create wort, yeast create beer, and that's exactly what they're now going to do.

You're going to add your yeast and they're going to eat as much sugar as they possibly can, and their by-product is going to be alcohol and carbon dioxide. Once they're done doing all they can and have given up their lives for a greater good, then you package the beer however you're going to do it. In a keg, in a bottle, in a can. Typically you are going to carbonate one way or another. You can directly add CO₂ in various methods, or you can add, like, a straight simple sugar, like literally a table sugar into there to give the remaining yeast a little more boost to create the type of carbon dioxide you want in your final beer. And then that's it, then you are ready to drink. So that is the process in very a very broad stroke timeline, nutshell, however you want to take that.

Julie: So you do all the boiling and everything. Does it have to sit for a while to, like... Like wine has to sit on the barrel for a long time. Is it the same for beer?

Matt: Well, you have to... Fermentation time is really, typically, your biggest obstacle. Now, you always have your exceptions in styles. With beer, you've got about a two-week fermentation time. Then, let's say, another two weeks to get past the youngness of it and the bottle shock into your different serving vessels. But then, typically, with most beers, after that you are just about coming up on its peak and... I'm not saying that it only lasts for four weeks. I'm saying it's ready to drink. That's what I'm trying to say.

There's some styles that are more malt heavy that do better with long-term aging. In fact there's almost a rite of passage for a brewer to make an English old ale, or an American barley wine that is one of the few beers that benefits from age. You make it and you, kind of, test yourself to see how many years you can wait until opening it. It's really painful, [laughs] but like I said, it's a rite of passage. But typically, after that four weeks, two months, somewhere in that range - depending on how much beer you made is also a bit of a factor - you're good to go and you're going to have a pretty consistent beer for four, five, or six months before things start to change for better or worse.

It's actually a much quicker payoff than wine. I do have a lot of friends that also make wine and ciders as well, and I don't have the patience. I couldn't do it. I need to know faster than they do what it tastes like.

Julie: So it's stable for, like, four to six months once it's at a drinkable stage?

Matt: Yep. If you've packaged everything well, if you've kept everything sanitized... Not quite sterilized. Sterilized, of course, is better but sanitized... As long as you packaged it properly and kept things clean, you're good.

Julie: So places like the gigantic Anheuser-Busch factories, do they add preservatives? Or is it just crappy beer and people are used to having crappy beer? [laughs]

Matt: I don't want to say they do because I don't know for sure. But it is a less complex beer, I'll say that, so there's less things for it to change for time. By the time it gets to the shelves it's done everything it's going to do, even age-wise, apart from years in the heat

or something; that's just a chemical reaction. But yeah, it's less complex, has less to do, everything's done. All the biotransformation that is possible is already done by the time it hits the shelf, typically.

Julie: I mean, this is not your area, but I'm super interested; how long could, theoretically, a bottle of beer stay on a shelf and then you drink it and it's okay, like still drinkable?

Matt: Man, I don't... A typical beer... That's a weird thing to say. But anything that's not meant to be aged, I think... Again, I really think if it was packaged clean and properly and then stored properly, there's really no dangerous age limit. There's a personal taste. I'm sure there's going to be a point of no return where the beer just stales out, but I think as long as it's clean and sanitary, and again, stored properly, I'm not entirely sure there's a real hard line. It could be years.

I have actually... [laughs] This is kind of funny. I can attest to that, now that I think about it. It was either my third or fourth beer I ever made, ever, years ago, I just found eight months ago in a cooler with an ice pack that has since melted. And I'm like, "You know, I wonder what this is going to taste like." [laughs] And it wasn't... Well, it wasn't good. But it wasn't bad and I still retained my sight after I tried it, so I can at least attest for five years in a home condition, in a hot garage... That's the only one I can say for sure. I know that for sure. Who knows what I'm going to find five years from now? I might be able to update that later.

Julie: Right. [laughs] So for folks preparing for the apocalypse, you heard it here first: You can put beer in your apocalypse stash. [laughs]

Matt: You know, I'll tell you, there's been things, like not even close to the apocalypse, where I just really wanted a beer, and I knew it wasn't good, and I knew it wasn't stored well, but I was like, "Eh, you know what? I know what I'm getting into. I'm going to open it anyway." So, you can be pretty lenient on yourself when it comes to those situations.

Julie: [laughs] That is hilarious. So, what kind of beer do you prefer to make? And has that changed over the course of the five years?

Matt: Oh yeah. That second part's a great question. I used to make... First, I would just make beers that I knew what they were supposed to taste like so that I knew I was getting close to it. Like an IPA is supposed to be very hoppy, and my first few weren't, and I kept adjusting and trying new things until I could get that taste dialed in. Then I'd go to, like, an Oktoberfest. Most of the beers that come out in fall, in general, the Märzens, the fest beers, amber ales, they were all already my favorite so that's where I would move to next.

Then getting not only into the hobby but into the community and learning more about it, and finding out that there's... Oh my gosh, I think officially right now there's 99 recognized styles of beer.

Julie: 99...

Matt: 99, yeah, in 37 different categories. So, between the subcategories it's 99 different... So I was like, "What are ones I've never heard of?" So I'd start to alternate between, "Okay, I want to try this new IPA recipe but I also want to try this Düsseldorf altbier that is only sold in one city in Germany that never gets to the country." So I would alternate between stuff I knew what it was supposed to taste like and stuff that maybe I would get at least close enough to introduce myself to that style. And that has opened up just a... That was, kind of, my point of no return in the hobby, when I started to study styles

and making styles. That was hobby-changing. I don't want to say life changing because that's a big term, but it was definitely hobby changing. It definitely turned a corner in the hobby and made it... I was already having fun, but now it's like, "Okay, this is the most fun I've ever had doing something that is this labor intensive."

Julie: So you mentioned there's 99 different types of beer. I guess, two questions. One is, how are they different? Not every single one, but generally, the different categories, how are they different? And then, how did you find how to make these ones you've never had before? Are there recipes online?

Matt: Okay, so first part of that... These styles, these are defined by the BJCP, which is the Beer Judge Certification Program. And the recognized styles are mostly for competition level. There's no, like, government office that says, "this has to be named that." I could make a...

Julie: Unlike wine, right?

Matt: Exactly. I could make a porter and put an IPA label on it and nothing's going to happen to me other than no one will buy it because that's false advertising. [laughs] But this is kind of in the competition realm. The way they differ... They're grouped into, like, a general category first and it kind of goes, roughly, from the least complex to the most complex, but sometimes they have to diverge. Like the very first beer category is called Standard American Beer, and that is the things we were just talking about; Budweiser, Coors Light. They're called American light lagers, American lagers, cream ales; these are the subcategories.

Moving on from that, like about halfway through... Let's see, I'm looking at a... Category 16, Dark British Beers, you get into your stouts, your oatmeal stouts, your sweet stouts, tropical stouts. And then it kind of... like I said, it keeps compounding from there. Six away from that is the IPAs, that's where the hop flavor kind of takes over. And then they start breaking down into real specific categories at the very end, like smoked beers, fruit beers, spice beers.

Now, as far as finding recipes, this amazed me. I never knew how much there was... I don't even know which one to pick. Alone on the internet and also in book form, people have been writing about just these styles... There is a whole slew of books that I own in Kindle form called Classic Beer Styles, and each book... I think in print they're maybe about 120, 130 pages. They're longer than you'd expect but not novel length. And it's each one of these categories I'm describing broken down, giving you the history, what best practices are, and then a good 20 recipes for you to try.

Between that and people posting about styles online and their recipes, I would just pick, one, "What do I have access to?" because sometimes you'll get a German recipe and I'm like, "I don't know this malter that lives in this cave in Cologne," or whatever. I can't access that, but I *can* get *this* ingredient and build from there. It is amazing how much is out there, but it's one of those things that unless you're looking for that kind of specific information, why would you ever stumble on it? And it wasn't until I got into the hobby that I realized how much information is out there.

Julie: What are the... of the ones that you've tried, which one was absolutely, like, "Wow. I could not have guessed I would've loved this one so much"? And what was the one that was like, "Oh my god, this is crap"?

Matt: [laughs] I'll tell you, the first one is easy. That is the entire line of British bitters. There's ordinary bitter, best bitter, and strong bitter, and all those are categorized mainly by their alcohol content, which none of them, I think, are over 6%. When half the name is bitter... It's got two names; best bitter. When half of it's bitter I'm like, "Nope. Not for me." But I was like, "No. There is so much character and so much complexity in this very low ABV beer, it's actually amazing." And that has been like my white whale. That is the one style that I have focused on for years that I've never medaled in. I always seem to get close, like I see what the final points are for people who have medaled, and I'm always like one or two away.

So that's been my white whale style to get a medal in, and honestly I'm not sure if it's going to be a good thing or a bad thing when I do, because am I going to stop making it? Because man, I'm enjoying - even when I don't win - having those beers leftover. So I'm not sure.

Now, on the other side of it, it's a strange question because I knew I generally don't like Belgian beers. Belgian beers is, with the subcategories, a bigger world than I realized, so I was like, "Let me give it a shot." I'll say, out of the, I think, eight official subcategories all together, I still haven't found one I like. [laughs] I really gave it an effort, but I just... There's something about that particular strain of Belgian yeast that the monks uncovered centuries ago that just... my palate is not a fan of. And I've *tried*. I really have.

Julie: How do you get your yeast? Do you have, like, a specific your-area-of-Orlando yeast that you use? Or do you buy, like, Fleischmann's yeast in a packet?

Matt: Actually, that's another bigger world I didn't realize existed until now. There's a couple... more than a couple. There's three main ones that I use because that's what my home brew shop carries and my preferred online retailer. Let me see if I can even... There are... Actually, I won't even look. For those... Let me give you the official number. It's actually 34 main styles, not 37. For those 34 styles, there's at least one yeast strain specifically made and engineered for that style, sometimes more. So there is a huge selection of yeast styles between yeast manufacturers.

The three I use - and these aren't limited to them - there's Wyeast, there's White Labs in San Diego, and there's Omega Labs, and they are just constantly scouring the world and playing Frankenstein's Monster with their yeast and just coming up... sometimes with new things, or sometimes discovering things that haven't been found for a while.

Right now the hot thing... Especially in quarantine, the hot thing for brewers right now is something called a Kveik yeast. It's a Norwegian yeast that absolutely thrives in hot temperatures. And I don't mean room temp, I mean *hot*; 80°, 90°. And people are loving that because the hotter it gets the faster it ferments, so people are able to turn around their beers in three or four days instead of two or three weeks. When you've got nothing else to do, if you've got a new beer every three or four days, things aren't so bad.

Julie: [laughs] Oh my goodness. So, let's go way back. Is it the oldest fermented drink, or is that mead?

Matt: It all depends on who's telling the story. It's either going to be that sahti is the oldest, which later becomes beer, because the main ingredients are relatively the same once you get hops. Now, they did have other botanicals in it, but they served the same purpose as hops. Or mead. Again, it all depends on who's telling the story. A meadery

is going to tell you mead. A brewer is going to tell you beer, essentially. And I've heard both stories told very convincingly. It's not a chicken-or-the-egg issue, but it's so long ago and there's so... I think both happened so relatively close in time to each other, and maybe even at the same time in different parts of the world, that we're just never going to know. I subscribe to entirely too many beer magazines at this point in my life, but every year one of them has a new piece of evidence showing that one came before the other, and it changes every year.

Julie: [laughs] I didn't know that there was a beer-versus-mead controversy. I'm sorry we waded into that.

Matt: [laughs] The fun part is... You don't really get arguments about it, but it is a conversation that... Like I said, it seems to change every year depending on who's telling the story.

Julie: It pre-dates, like, written communication, right?

Matt: Right. Yeah, always the latest piece of evidence never has anything to do with any kind of written record. It always seems to do with a piece of a clay pot that has evidence of a distant relative of a brewer's yeast somehow embedded into it. It's like, that's the evidence they're using for their argument this week. It's never a written record. It's always something archaeological.

Julie: Got it. Now have you considered making mead? Or are you just pretty happy with beer?

Matt: I'm happy with beer. The club I'm in has some very successful and award-winning mead makers, and I'd like to maybe try it with them. The two biggest differences in mead making as opposed to beer making is your mead is really dependent on the quality of your honey, and the higher quality honey you're going to get, the more expensive it gets. And it takes... you're not getting a one-pound honey bear bottle; you're getting gallons of it. And you also want to make sure... Not only are you putting that investment into it but you've got to make sure everything else in your process is right. I don't know it enough to try it, but I would like to follow along with one of my other brewers.

And the other thing is, is that it's a longer overall process. The brewing process, timewise, that's about the same, but fermentation, getting it ready for package, and post-package is longer than beer. I like the time range it takes to make a beer. It's, "good things come to those who wait," but I don't want to wait any more than that.

Julie: So, you mentioned that you're in a club and that there's competitions, so it's sounds like you've entered your beer in competitions. Do you do it as a club and enter the competition? Is it individual? How does that all play together?

Matt: You enter as an individual, but you will cite your club membership. My winning, my medal, my prize is my prize. But points will also be attributed to the club. I think it's 3-2-1; three for gold, two for silver, one for bronze. And then the club, there is a first, second, and third winner for that region at the end of the year. So even though my success is... I do get the spotlight when I do win, it does also help out the club by the end of the season as well, when there is a season. This year, of course, was a different story.

Julie: How does a competition work? Walk me through, like...

Matt: Well, apart from... This is another thing I *never* thought I'd do in a million years. I'm actually... right now I am a provisional beer judge. I just took my ranking test in September to find out what actual rank I'm going to be. But I passed the test enough to be a provisional judge. So I have judged competitions. And what happens is, you'll get a flight of beer. You'll know nothing about what anyone had to do with it other than what style it is. It's a category, and anything in that could be in the subcategory.

So let's say I'm judging a standard American beer. My flight can have American light lager, American lager cream ale, or American wheat beer. I'm poured a sample, I'm given a number, and then I have a blank sheet in front of me I have to fill out, and I have to judge it according to what the style guidelines say it should be. I judge it on appearance, aroma, taste, mouthfeel, and then my overall impression of the beer.

You'll take a look at it first, what does it look like, how does it match up to what it should look like. Then you'll sample the aroma before you get anything on your palate. Taste it, get your initial tasting, write down your initial notes. Smell it again to follow through what's lingering on your palate. Taste again. And repeat that as many times as you need to make sure you've given the beer its fair comparison to what it should be.

And then you'll rate it, and then from there you'll usually decide by score... Score will be the first factor. Like, "Do any of these have a high enough score to go on to Best of Show?" And you'll pick your... let's say it's a flight of six, you'll pick two of them. And by the time everyone's done judging that category you have six beers. Then it's just a straight-up "What beer do I like best?" And then you'll typically have three judges to make sure you don't have a split. And then you'll decide your first, second, and third for that category.

Then the first of that goes on to Best of Show, which really took me a long time to disassociate from dog shows and the Christopher Guest movie. [laughs] And that all depends on... That typically does have your 34 beers. If every category been entered, you have at least... no matter how small or large your competition is, you'll have 20 beers to go through and you've got to pick the best three, which is fun and daunting at the same time.

Julie: Is it like a wine competition where you taste it and you spit it out?

Matt: No! Oh god, no. What's the point of that?? [laughs]

Julie: [laughs] And beer's way less alcoholic than wine anyway, right?

Matt: That's true, yeah.

Julie: Now, you've won awards at these competitions too?

Matt: Yes, a few.

Julie: What did you win for?

Matt: My very first medal ever was that Düsseldorf altbier that I kind of joked about learning the style and whatnot, and it was the very first one I brewed. I had no idea what the style is, I wanted to know, I brewed it and was like, "This tastes really good. I don't know if it's right, but what the heck. What's it going to cost me but a little time and a couple bucks?" And I won a silver medal. So, not only that, but second... And ironically... This is hilarious that I'm revisiting all this stuff in one conversation. The next one I won, which was... It was a bronze, not a silver, but it was one of the Belgian beers that I couldn't stand. I couldn't stand it but apparently the people judging it could stand it.

Then the first gold I ever got was an English old ale, which I was super proud of because that's one of my absolute favorite styles, and to be able to make one that someone else thought enough to place number one out of... I don't know, I think there was, like, 25 beers in that category. I was really, really excited about that. That was my first gold. Unfortunately, I got into the national competition... Well, fortunately I got into the national competition but unfortunately it was cancelled. But I had the opportunity to either pick my beers up or have them donated to make hand sanitizers. I did the hand sanitizer thing so I felt some good came out of it if nothing else.

Julie: Aw. What did you enter?

Matt: I actually did a best bitter, my new favorite obsession. I was like, "If I'm going to place, let it be nationals at this point, because dammit I haven't placed anywhere else yet."

Julie: What is the flavor profile of bitters?

Matt: It's a complement... This is where it gets tricky to dial in right. It's a complement to the sweet malts. By nature, malts... they're sugar. You're turning starches into sugar. So, you already have a load of sweet working against you, and then the higher alcohol you get, the more perceived sweetness you get. It just opens those receptors in your tongue and your palate even though it's not necessary chemically sweet.

So the bitter is not, like, dark chocolate bitter where you feel it in the back of your tongue and you get, like... your cheeks might even pucker a little bit from astringency. It's more of a balance to the sweet. It's noticeable. You can say, "Yes, there's a bitter element in here," but it's not a solely bitter beer. It's a very strange name, but knowing now many more English beers, especially back in the day when these things were named... You had your India pale ale, and then you had your very strong, sweet old ales, barley wine, wheat wine, I could see where, "compared to all those, this is the only thing we ever perceive bitter." I see where the name came from, but unfortunately... Not unfortunately, it's a little misleading by today's... when you have 99 other beer names to call it, it's a little misleading.

Julie: So when did you first drink a beer, and what kind was it?

Matt: I don't know which ones my fathers or uncles or any of them let me sip, but I do remember stealing a Rolling Rock from a picnic in my, maybe, early teens. I might not have been yet, but that was my first official, remembered taste of one. And then anytime... even before 21 and up to 21, it's like, I didn't know, so it was always Budweiser, Bud Light. I thought I was pretty fancy when I was ordering a Molson on my 21st birthday. So, it wasn't until... I'd honestly say it wasn't until my 30s where I just would venture out to craft beers and went, "Holy cow, there's a whole new world out here." And that was even before I started brewing. So I was just, "A beer is a beer is a beer," until, I don't know, 30 or so.

Julie: You've been super deep into this for a lot of years now. What has been the most surprising thing for you about the process of brewing beer, or just the hobby in general?

Matt: The most surprising thing, the bottom-line surprising thing is how easy it actually is to make beer. Like, the actual process of it from beginning to end is not nearly as difficult as I thought it was. But anyone can make beer. Anyone that thinks you need a whole brewery and a whole setup, no. You need hot water, some ground malts, some hops, and yeast. Literally, you need those four things. It is much easier than I thought it was

to make it. But it's far more... I wouldn't say it's more challenging, because that always intimidated me. It's the challenge of making the beer I wanted to make. That part has actually been fun. It was daunting, I didn't understand it; the more I learn the more fun it gets. But I was quite surprised how easy the entire actual process is.

Julie: Are there misconception about beer or making beer that drive you crazy? Like, are there things you hear in culture or whatever that you're like, "No! That's not right."?

Matt: The biggest thing that drives me nuts is that someone will say they just don't like beer. I feel 100% - and my wife is definitive proof of this - that is not true. You just have not had a beer you like. Maybe someone did try 100 beers and they haven't found it, but mostly it's that you try what everyone thinks is beer and you think that's the only thing there is to it, and that's just not true. It's such a huge world that I didn't know either. I can't say I was born with that knowledge by any means, but it's crazy how rich the beer world is.

Julie: So a lot of people, they kind of just stop with the Buds of the world because maybe they don't know where to look or they have a perception that craft beers are really expensive. Is there an answer to that? And where would people go to find, like, reasonably priced beers that are not Bud?

Matt: Well, that is 100% true. I can't even argue that craft beer isn't more expensive than Bud. I mean, a four-pack of... What am I even drinking now... A four-pack of my favorite brewery, Sideward Brewery, is going to be a dollar less than a 12-pack of Budweiser, and that's three times the amount of beer. That is true, but you do get what you pay for.

As far as finding what you like, there's two big resources. These huge spirit shops are popping up. I think it's BevMo! in California, we have Total Wine here in Orlando. I think there's Total Wine in California too. Last time I was up there, I was at one. Now's a bad time for this example, but any other weekend in a normal situation, you go down that craft beer aisle and there will be somebody, a representative, either from the company or from another company that... just talk to them about what you like taste-wise. They're marketing people but they're also trained to answer these questions. They will lead you in the right direction.

A better resource, in fact one that I highly support everybody do no matter where you listen to this, is go to your local breweries. Local breweries are going to have 10 to 20 taps of beers they've made. They're going to have every style in the rainbow, and they are going to let you try that before you commit to buying a glass. You might be surprised. Maybe you think you don't like a beer you can't see through because it's pitch black because you tried a Guinness once and it was way too dry and bitter for you. A porter looks exactly the same and it could be brownie sweet. It could be the tastiest thing. So, go to your local breweries, check them out, support them, and try their stuff. You might be surprised, again, how big the world of beer actually is compared to what you've experienced so far.

Julie: Wineries will specialize in, like, "We've got pinot, and we do chardonnay, and that's all we do," so it sounds like breweries have a wider range of beers that they offer?

Matt: Generally they do, yeah. There are some that will stick to a theme, like maybe classic European styles, but even that's a pretty wide range too. And there are... I hope these don't overrun the market, our specialists in Orlando that popped up before covid... I'm not a sour fan and I will make no bones about it. If someone likes sours, that's fine, but

I don't. But apart from someone that specializes in... Sour is a style. I'd say that's about the only style-focused brewery I know of. Even the ones here that specialize in European styles, that's still a very large range of beers. So generally, yes, there's going to be a wide selection at a local brewery.

Julie: If someone is like, "This sounds so much fun!" and they want to get started with brewing their own beer, how would you recommend they get started with that?

Matt: If I were to do it all again, what I would do is I'd just go to one of the big home brew websites. MoreBeer.com; I have no affiliation with them so I don't mind saying this. Go and look at brewing kits and look at something that looks like something you can handle. You're going to see everything. You're going to see one pot and bottles, and you're going to see three pots and a fermenter, and everything in between. Look at something that you want to know about, that you think you can handle, that you can afford, whatever the situation is.

And then take that, whatever the name of that is, put it in YouTube. I guarantee you're going to get at least ten videos that show you how to use that thing, and then see if that's something you can handle or are willing to learn. And if not, then go back and look again. And then YouTube is just one resource. There is not a single brewing method, vessel, system, whatever you want to call it, that I have ever seen anywhere, anyone sell, or put together themselves that there is not a slew of web articles or entire sites dedicated to. It's crazy how much information is out there. You're going to find sites that are text based, all the way up to things that are just made yesterday. It's been around for a long time. I think it was 1984 where Jimmy Carter legalized home brewing for the country, and ever since then people have just been documenting the heck out of it.

Julie: Got it. And if they want to learn about the different types of beer... Maybe they don't want to brew it themselves but they just want to try out different beer styles, where would they go to find out about that?

Matt: The BJCP website, that's the Beer Judge Certification Program, BJCP.org; it's a 100-page-ish document... It's a PDF, it's completely free, and it describes every one of their recognized styles, and it breaks it down the same way you'd judge it. It breaks it down from appearance, flavor, mouthfeel, overall, and then there's also a comments thing, which kind of gives you a little bit of things you would need to know in the process if you're going to make it yourself, and then a little brief one-paragraph history of each one, for every one of these. This is a great free resource to see how many different beers are recognized out there in the world.

Julie: Kind of like a Beer Bible.

Matt: Exactly! [laughs]

Julie: Matt, thank you so much. This has been so interesting. I can feel your excitement just coming through the airwaves. I really appreciate all the time.

Matt: Thank you! I had a great time too.

You can find Matt on [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#) as @BigMonsterBrewing. Of course I'll put links to everything in the show notes.

Just a reminder that you can find this podcast on Instagram [@LoveWhatYouLovePod](#), and on Twitter, [@WhatYouLovePod](#), and the website is [LoveWhatYouLovePod.com](#).

Zeke Rodrigues Thomas at Mindjam Media provides amazing editing assistance. You can find Zeke at [MindjamMedia.com](#). All of the transcripts for *Love What You Love* are available for everyone on the website. Thanks, as always, to Emily White for the fantastic transcripts. If you need transcripts, reach out to her at [HireEmilyWhite@gmail.com](#). The music for *Love What You Love* is called "Inspiring Hope" by Pink-Sounds. A link to that artist is included in the show notes.

Okay y'all, that's it for this week. Get out there, love the hell out of whatever it is that you love. You need it, and we need it. Thanks for listening. Let's hang out again soon.

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