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Beaver Island Brewing Co. begins production at new facility, cans to hit shelves June 6

Alyssa Zaczek , azaczek@stcloudtimes.com 7:48 p.m. CT May 24, 2017



Beer should hit shelves June 6



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(Photo: Dave Schwarz, dschwarz@stcloudtimes.com)

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Beaver Island Brewing Co. began canning at its new production facility Wednesday, marking the brewery's transition to a system that more than quadruples its production capacity.

"This is the single biggest step that we will take probably in the next five years," said co-founder Nick Barth.

Beaver Island broke ground at 401 Electron Drive in the St. Cloud Airport Business Park in the summer of 2016.

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First cans of craft beer come off the line at Beaver Island Brewing
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Empty cans are ready to be filled Wednesday, May 24 on the first day of production at the new Beaver Island Brewing Company facility in St. Cloud. (Photo: Dave Schwarz, dschwarz@stcloudtimes.com)

The facility, which does not include a taproom and is focused entirely on production, can produce "about 6,500 barrels" per year according to Barth.

"We can make significantly more beer here than we can downtown," he said of the facility. "For the next six to 12 months, the downtown location will produce all the draft beer, all the small batches, one-offs and limited releases. This facility will focus primarily on canning."

Barth said the brewery's strategy for the launch of its canned products is directly informed by the draft product.

"Obviously right now there's a heavy emphasis on liquor stores, but we don't want to lose our love with the retailers, because we were with them first," he said. "We want to lead with draft, get it into the hands of consumers at the bars and restaurants, and then follow up with the cans in liquor stores."

By offering beer in six packs of 12-ounce cans, Beaver Island will open its sphere of influence beyond customers of Minnesota restaurants and bars.

"The St. Cloud area, the Duluth area which includes the North Shore, the Brainerd Lakes area and also Bemidji will all have cans," said Barth. "We're really

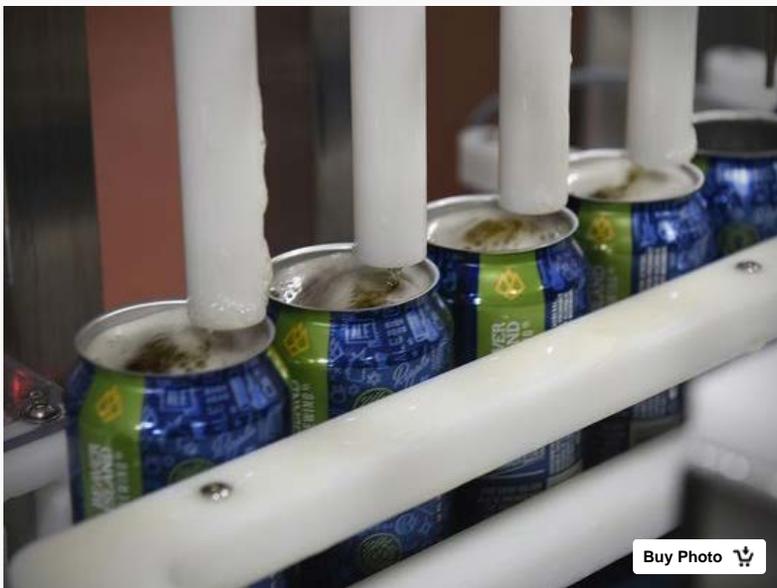


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Fresh cans of Ripple come off the canning line Wednesday, May 24 on the first day of production at the new Beaver Island Brewing Company facility in St. Cloud. (Photo: Dave Schwarz, dschwarz@stcloudtimes.com)

excited to spread our message and share our story with, potentially, brand new consumers who have never heard of us before."

"For two and a half years, if we wanted to bring a beer home or sample out to a customer, we had to do it in a growler. Now, to be able to bring them a six pack, set it down and say, 'Here, this is what we have to offer,' ... that's been really surreal."



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Cans are filled with beer Wednesday, May 24 on the first day of production at the new Beaver Island Brewing Company facility in St. Cloud. (Photo: Dave Schwarz, dschwarz@stcloudtimes.com)

The canning line itself, which was made by Wild Goose Canning in Boulder, Colorado, produces about 40 cans per minute, according to Barth.

"We can do about 1,500 gallons worth of beer in an eight-hour shift," he said, noting that although staff has been working "practically round-the-clock" to get the facility up

and running, the machine would not be producing 24 hours a day.

Ultimately, Beaver Island's core brands, which include Ripple, '39 Red IPA and Sweet Mississippi, will hit liquor store shelves on Tuesday, June 6 in 12-ounce six packs. Barth said he'd like to see the six packs sold "in the \$9.99 range."



Brewmaster Chris Laumb stacks cases of freshly-canned Ripple beer off the line Wednesday, May 24 on the first day of production at the new Beaver Island Brewing Company facility in St. Cloud. (Photo: Dave Schwarz, dschwarz@stcloudtimes.com)

Eager beavers can get a sneak peek of the canned product during the St. Cloud Rox opening weekend at Joe Faber Field, June 2-4.

"You'll be able to go to the concession stand or out on the terrace and try the canned beers," said Barth. "Baseball with beer, you know, it's a great pairing."

After the canned products launch in area liquor stores, the Beaver Island team will set their sights on fall brews like Oktoberfest and Tip-Up Winter Ale, followed by new brews for Spring 2018.



Cans are filled with beer on the canning line Wednesday, May 24 on the first day of production at the new Beaver Island Brewing Company facility in St. Cloud. (Photo: Dave Schwarz, dschwarz@stcloudtimes.com)

In the meantime, Barth said the Beaver Island crew is focused on getting cans to the consumer — and making sure those cans satisfy their customers' cravings for the same Beaver Island Brewing Co. beers they've come to know and love.

"We literally would not have cans today if it wasn't for people who wanted to support our beer, our brand and our people," said Barth.

"We wanted to share our passion and showcase our community, and now we're able to do that, 12 ounces at a time."

Follow Alyssa Zaczek on Twitter [@sctimesalyssa](https://twitter.com/sctimesalyssa), email her at azaczek@stcloudtimes.com, or call her at (320) 255-8761.

