Brewery Debuts Baranov Bicentennial

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Brewery guys Mike Trussell (left) and Ben Millstein (middle), along with Kodiak Historical Society Executive Director Katie Oliver, celebrate the release of the Baranov Bicentennial Russian Imperial Stout. Proceeds from the sale of the beverage will go toward restoration of the Russian American Magazin, the 200-year-old National Historic Landmark that currently houses the historical society's Baranov Museum. (Photo by Casey Kelly/KMXT).

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Casey Kelly/KMXT

The oldest Russian built structure still standing in Alaska is celebrating its bicentennial anniversary this year, and the Kodiak Island Brewing Company is helping it celebrate with a Russian Imperial Stout in the style of 18th century beers originally brewed for the court of Catherine the Great. KMXT’s Casey Kelly had a taste, and filed this report.

The “Baranov Bicentennial Russian Imperial Stout” is more than just a clever name for the latest beer from the Kodiak Island Brewing Company. Owner Ben Millstein says it was brewed with two separate additions of centennial hops, making it a true bicentennial beer.

(Millstein 1 :33s “…contribute to the bitterness.”)

Russian Imperial Stouts by their nature are strong, dark beers, with a higher alcohol content. Millstein says they can range from six percent up to twenty percent alcohol. The Baranov Bicentennial is eight percent, and it has a deep, rich, black color, with a hint of molasses, making it a good beer to drink with a meal, or perhaps dessert.

(Millstein 2 :26s “…we’re on that subject.”)

The occasion for the specialty beer is the 200th anniversary of the National Historic Landmark known as the Russian American Magazin, home to the Kodiak Historical Society’s Baranov Museum, and the oldest Russian-built structure in the state. Executive Director Katie Oliver says the historical society’s board of directors was brainstorming ways to raise money for building restorations, when they hit upon the idea of partnering with the brewery.

(Oliver 1 :16s “…so we’re thrilled.”)

A dollar from every growler of Baranov Bicentennial sold will go to the historical society as part of the matching funds for a 274-thousand dollar Save America’s Treasures grant from the federal government. Oliver says every little bit will help the society address some structural issues with the Baranov Museum building.

(Oliver 2 :08s “…trying to do on the building.”)

Shortly after the first batch of Bicentennial had been tapped Friday afternoon, Millstein, Oliver and this reporter decided to try a sample, with an appropriately Russian toast.

(Taste test :36s “…blends into it real nicely.”)

Millstein says over time the beer’s flavors will change and even out slightly, so he’s planning on saving a little to try a year from now. Oliver says that sounds good to her.

(Oliver 3 :05s “…mission serving for us.”)

The Baranov Bicentennial will be on tap at the brewery for the rest of the summer. Growlers are 16 dollars, with a five-dollar deposit for the container.

I’m Casey Kelly.

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