



Romancing the Foam No. 94



The Indonesian Government announced on April Fool's Day that it is considering banning Leonardo DiCaprio from the country over his opposition to Palm Oil Plantations. DiCaprio raised concerns that the clearing of rainforest for palm oil plantations destroys habitat for the endangered Sumatran elephant and kills more than fifty orangutans per week. The City of Silver Bay took similar action recently voting to ban Bent Paddle beer from its municipal liquor store in retaliation to the brewery's membership in the Downstream Business Coalition. Silver Bay joined several private liquor stores on the Iron Range that have also removed Bent Paddle Beer from their shelves. The Downstream Business Coalition is a group of 80 small businesses that oppose the proposed PolyMet NorthMet copper-nickel mine. Copper-nickel mines are nasty business. PolyMet has developed extensive plans for preventing pollution but the mine will ultimately discharge to Lake Superior, the cleanest of the Great Lakes, home to 10% of the world's

freshwater and the source of Bent Paddle's water. While the PolyMet NorthMet mine will only operate for 20 years, the company's pollution prevention plans will require water treatment for 200 to 500 years. A lot can happen in 200 to 500 years - the first European, Etienne Brule reached Lake Superior 396 years ago and the Minnesota Territory became part of the United States 167 years ago. The Downstream Business Coalition has concerns about the potential for accidents and about the efficacy of operating a wastewater treatment system for 8 to 20 generations.

Bent Paddle is one of Minnesota's more environmentally forward breweries with a commitment to sustainability embedded in their mission statement. They make a point of using US made brewery equipment, using recyclable or reusable materials where possible, buy local when they can, donate their spent grain to local farmers, require caterers and food trucks that serve the brewery to use bio-compostable or reusable packaging, plateware and flatware, deliver their beer with a van capable of

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running on biodiesel, reclaim some of their brewery process water for reuse in the brewery, installed energy efficient lighting and other energy efficient equipment. They use ecologically sound biodegradable cleaning products in their tap room, have a charitable giving program, and are a signing member of the Ceres Minnesota Climate Declaration.



I had my first Bent Paddle Black Ale (6.0% alcohol by volume - abv, 34 International Bittering Units - IBU) in February, 2014 at the Happy Gnome with a big charcuterie plate stacked with house cured meats and pickled vegetables. With this beer Bent Paddle aims for something between a porter and a stout with a zaftig stout body without the stout's assertive roast flavors. Roasty, toasty aromas rise from the glass laced with light coffee and chocolate. It has a mellow, lightly sweet palate with layers of grain, bread crumb, roast, light coffee and chocolate rounded out with some flaked oats which add another dimension of grain and give the beer a bit of creaminess. A deft touch of hops provides balancing bitterness, especially on the finish. It is a smooth drink with nothing harsh or

overstated. I rate Bent Paddle Black Ale 90 out of 100.

Bent Paddle Cold Pressed Black Ale is the Black Ale dosed with cold pressed coffee from the Duluth Coffee Company. It tastes and feels creamier, pouring bright black with a rocky and persistent 2" light tan clingy foam cap. The aroma has the same grain notes as the Black Ale with a stronger coffee presence. The coffee is rich but not aggressive or harshly bitter and is well highlighted by a touch of sweet dark malt and grain spice. The sweetness is mild – suggests a light brown sugar - not molasses and nothing harsh or burnt. The hops provide a balancing bitterness with light citrus notes. Cold Pressed Black Ale drinks clean and smooth with a medium body and medium but very soft carbonation. This is a very nice and well balanced beer with just enough coffee to match but not overpower the malt and complement but not drowned out the hops. I particularly like the texture of this beer. I rate cold pressed Black Ale 91.



I had my first taste of bitters in a pub a short distance from Angel Alley on Whitechapel High Street in London's East End during the early 70's. One of my hippie anarchist friends handed me a pint of bitters – it wasn't what I expected. The word bitters evokes Peychaud's or Angostura bitters or perhaps a glass of tonic. My first Bitter had medium high bitterness but medium high malt flavors and some fruitiness from

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the yeast kept the hop bitterness in balance. It also had less carbonation than beer back home. Bitters became popular around the dawn of the twentieth century as a cask conditioned draught beer served fresh by a hand pump. These malty, low carbonated beers come in three strengths – Ordinary Bitter with 3.2 – 3.8% abv, Special, Best or Premium Bitter

ranging from 3.8 – 4.6 % abv and Extra Special or Strong Bitter (ESB) with abv in the 4.6 – 6.2% range. The British consider these session beers, especially the lower alcohol versions, meaning you can drink half a dozen or so of these over the course of an evening and remain sober enough to make it home without falling into the Thames or stepping in front of a red double-decker bus.



Bent Paddle's 14° ESB earned a bronze medal at the 2014 Great American Beer Festival and a silver at the 2015 event. Clocking in at 5.6% abv 14° ESB's strength is mid-range. It pours brilliant deep amber to brown kicking up a 3" persistent and lacy cream colored foam cap. Moderate level aromas of biscuit, floral and earthy hops and traces of nuts rise from the glass. Medium high levels of malt begin the attack with fruit, biscuit, nuts, and a light malty sweetness. There is a suggestion of chocolate with grain and a bitter hop accent drying things out on

the finish. I particularly enjoy this beer's creaminess and how it works to complement the flavors. The body is on the light side of medium and the carbonation is medium to medium low but is very soft. While the beer is not as filling as some, its full flavor invites you to savor it slowly. Try this with fish and chips or bangers and mash. I rate this 95.

Bent Paddle Hop Forest Double IPA is an 8.9% abv specialty release packed with 100 IBUs of hop flavor, aroma and bitterness. The brilliant copper gold liquid produces a mildly persistent 1" off-white foam cap. Hop aromas dominate with blending tropical and north woods as citrus, floral, and pine aromas weave in and out supported by mild biscuit bread crumb. There is some faint forest floor dank in the background. Tropical fruit, melon and citrus flavors come out more on the palate on a bread crumb backbone. The malt is moderate, the hop flavors are medium high, and the hop bitterness is medium. Hop Forest has a soft, creamy texture a medium body, medium carbonation, and very mild warming. It is a delightful beer with a big hop presence that is well rounded and not harsh. I rate it 90.



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These 4 top notch beers are a good reason to check out Bent Paddle's beer. Since they opened, Bent Paddle has released 32 different beers. They currently have 4 flagship beers, three specialty beers and three seasonals. Most are released in cans. The Duluth brewery also offers growlers and a few specialty beers in 750 ml bombers.

