

Yalobusha Brewing arrives in New Orleans with a series of launch parties



Yalobusha Brewing, based in Water Valley, Miss., has arrived in New Orleans. (*Don Feitel*)



By **Laura McKnight, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune**

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on July 25, 2014 at 4:44 PM, updated July 25, 2014 at 4:45 PM

The latest set of Mississippi craft beers to flow into Louisiana hail from Water Valley, a "very small country town" with a population of about 3,000, according to Yalobusha Brewing owner Andy O'Bryan.

Yalobusha beer started arriving in New Orleans this week, with about a dozen local restaurants and bars offering the new brews on tap by Friday afternoon (July 25) -- and more should be added soon.

The brewery aims to get its beer into about 40 restaurants and bars in the New Orleans area, including the north shore and Metairie, O'Bryan said.

Beer-drinkers can get celebratory tastes of Yalobusha brews during a series of launch parties, with the next starting at 5 p.m. Friday (July 25), upstairs at Avenue Pub, 1732 St. Charles Ave. Launch parties are also scheduled for 7 to 9 p.m. Saturday (July 26) at MoPho, 514 City Park Ave. and 5 p.m. Monday (July 28) at The Chimes in Covington, 19130 Rogers Lane.

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The Mississippi brewery's address might be small-town, but Yalobusha's brew masters hold big-name experience that helped them develop innovative beers with various West Coast and Southern influences, O'Bryan said.

Tony Balzola spent the last 13 years as a head brewer for Portland, Oregon-based McMenamins, which operates a large chain of craft breweries, brewpubs and more. Amos Harvey worked as a brewer at Big Horn Brewing in Boise, Idaho, and at Louisiana's Abita Brewing.

"The recipes they're coming up with are unique," O'Bryan said.

For example, Yalobusha's flagship brews include River Ale, a "Pale Pilsner." The unusual hybrid beer is fermented with ale yeast but uses 95 percent pilsner malts, a combination done very rarely, if ever, before, O'Bryan said.

Another flagship, Copperhead Amber Ale, "is a hoppy kind of amber ale" and the brewery's best-seller so far, he said. The third flagship brew, Miss-iss-IPA, is a "very balanced" sessionable IPA (6 percent ABV), O'Bryan said.

Along with the flagship brews, the New Orleans area gets a special treat: the last allotment of the latest release of Testify, a bourbon barrel-aged milk stout released in limited amounts twice a year.

Yalobusha Brewing, which opened in April 2013, draws its name and essence from a key ingredient for good beer: good water.

Yalobusha is named after the county in which the brewery sits and a major river in Mississippi. Yalobusha Brewing doesn't use water from its namesake, but does draw water straight from the Meridian Aquifer, which means no chemical treatment necessary, O'Bryan said.

Yalobusha is now available only on draft, but the brewery plans to start offering packaged beer in the fall, he said.

For more on the brewery and upcoming events, visit Yalobusha's [Facebook page](#) and [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) accounts.

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