

# SLOW BOAT

# BREWERY

## A discussion with co-founder Chandler Jurinka

by Lauren Johnson

**S**low Boat Brewery, the brainchild of Chandler Jurinka and Dan Hebert, is Beijing's much anticipated up and coming craft brewery. Producing American-style brews, the upstart is set to launch this winter. **HOPS** sat down with Chandler Jurinka to discuss the future of beer brewing in China and how two American guys came to open a state-of-the-art microbrewery in the Middle Kingdom.

### Why the name Slow Boat?

We wanted a name that signified our connection to China, rang familiar with our drinkers and hinted at something that came from abroad. Slow Boat Brewery felt right. Slow Boat Brewery came from the song, "Slow Boat to China" written by Frank Loesser in the late 40s. It's been performed by a long line of artists since. The song connects the United States, where the style of our beer comes from, to China as its destination.

### I hear you have a Northwest brew. How did this come about? Are you from the NW?

The Pacific Northwest Red Ale is among our most popular beers. It's a medium body ale with a complex malt character and nose, flavors of caramel and hints of chocolate grains. It has a deeper hue of red and slightly hoppy bite than its English or Irish cousin. Finally it's aged and naturally carbonated for a clean finish. Dan Hebert, Slow Boat Brewery's master brewer, is from the American Pacific Northwest so this beer is a tribute to the flavors present in his home state of Oregon.

### How did you and your partner start brewing beer together?

Dan Hebert and I met a while back at an event in Beijing. The more time we spent talking about beer the more we discovered a shared vision in common- producing craft-brewed ales and lagers that underscore American brewing methods.

### How is your beer unique and different from Great Leap Brewery's beer?

Each brewery has its own recipes and for me that is why craft brewing is so interesting. In that way craft beer is a lot like wine. A beer lover can like and dislike beers from

different brewers alike. I like our beers because they run along the lines of those found in the American Pacific Northwest: hoppy, flavorful and unique with plenty of character. We use a wide range of specialty hops to distinguish our ales as well as specialty yeast which adds to our beers' distinctive taste, clarity and smooth finish. If you enjoy beers like Sierra Nevada or Brooklyn Brewery then you'll love ours.

### Tell me about you and your partner.

Daniel Hebert is Slow Boat Brewery's master brewer and my partner. In the past Daniel studied classical cooking techniques at the Oregon Coast Culinary Institute as well as restaurant management. Through tutelage of brew masters in Oregon, Daniel learned to brew the distinct beer styles of the Pacific Northwest. Fast forward to three years ago when Daniel and his wife decided to return to China, with the idea of bringing craft beer to China. Daniel's expertise and passion in making craft beer comes through in products with uncompromising character. His beers are of the highest quality and include only the finest natural ingredients. The results are products with uncompromising quality.

### Why China, Why now, Why Beijing?

China is ready for craft brewing. Consumers are increasingly looking for unique and high quality goods and what Slow Boat offers meets that need. When Dan and I first met, the idea of starting a brewery seemed a bit crazy. About the same time bottled American craft beers began appearing in bars and restaurants around Beijing. We were encouraged by their success. Shanghai had its Boxing Cat Brewery but Beijing, at the time, didn't have an American style brewery. After more than a year of market research we finally decided that now was the time and forged ahead.

### Is this a difficult industry to be in?

It is. There are substantial barriers to entry in this industry. Plenty of capital, brewing expertise and strict adherence to local regulations are all necessary to succeed. Sourcing quality ingredients is also difficult. We have to import almost everything we use to make our beers. And of course regulations surrounding food and beverage control are on the increase (we see that as a good sign) which in the end

makes brewing beer more expensive. In the end, chances of getting rich are very slim, so stamina and passion are essential.

### We hear you made all your own gear in Germany and shipped it in. How did you manage that?

Our brewing equipment is custom made in accordance with the standards established by Kaspar Shulz, Germany's oldest manufacturer of brewing equipment. We didn't take any shortcuts. We made the decision to go that route because we felt that great quality and consistency can only be achieved when there is an obsessive attention to excellence at every level.

### Can you describe craft beers to a beer noob?

Lots of people associate American beer with Budweiser. Slow Boat Brewery produces beer that is unique, flavorful and full of character. We are currently brewing five beers and expect to have twelve by spring. Each beer has its own unique personality so there is something for everyone to enjoy and love. Generally our brewing style focuses on the American Pacific Northwest emphasizing process, quality ingredients and hoppiness. And like wine, our beers pair very well with a variety of different foods.

### I've seen quite a bit in local press about the brewery, seems you are blowing up of late. How is this success impacting your plans for the future?

Success constantly reminds us of the responsibility we have to our drinkers. That in no way has impacted our plans for the future. We will continue to research new tastes, new brews, better ingredients and greener ways to make beer. We like to talk to those that drink our brews because their feedback is one way we know that what we are doing is right. We plan on continuing to release creative beers that give our drinkers reasons to return again and again.

### So far, what brews are available?

Right now we have the American Pale Ale, Pacific Northwest Red Ale, Coffee Porter, Brown Ale and Oatmeal Stout. We are now working on an additional seven that include seasonals and specialty beers.

### Will your beer soon be available around town in local bars, etc?

We brew premium products so our distribution will extend to high-end restaurants and bars around Beijing. Distribution will begin shortly after the New Year.

### Brewing is more an art than a science, so how does one get good at it?

The only way to get good at brewing is through years of experience. Behind every great beer there is passion, attention to detail and years of mentoring and experience. Quality ingredients and process are equally important.

### How are you getting your ingredients? Shipped from abroad or locally sourced?

All of our ingredients are imported from abroad in large shipping containers.

### Any winter brews we should know about!

We have a Christmas Ale for the holidays, Maibock for the spring, Amber Ale for St. Patrick's Day, and just in time for the warm weather a Summer Pilsner.

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With a deep passion for good beer and a pension for creativity, the duo have soft launched the beers in Beijing, and are set to make a splash late winter with their official debut. Expect to find Slow Boat Brewery beers at a Beijing pub near you by spring.