

# foodshed

Autumn 2012

Eat where you live.

## MAN ON FIRE

Tarver King

Amber Waves  
in C'ville

True Grits

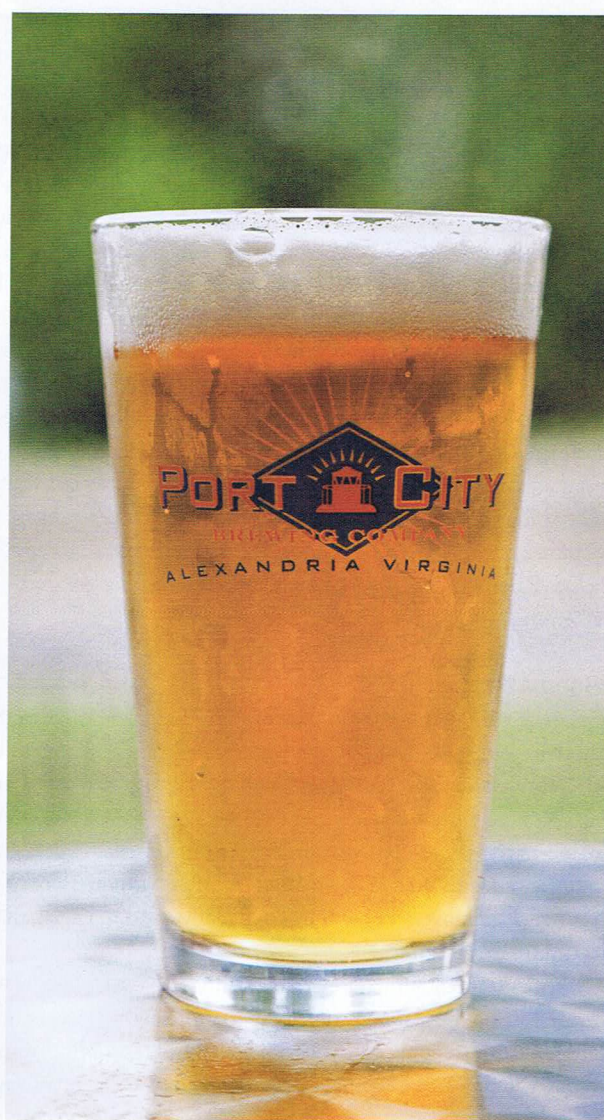
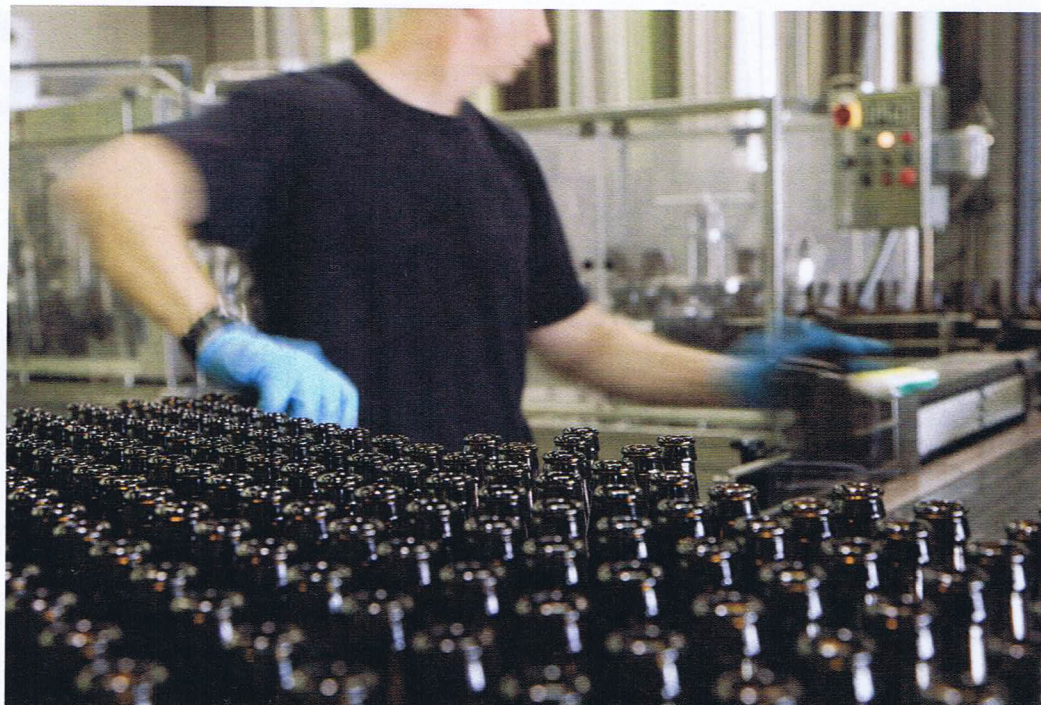
Marian Burros's  
Holiday Gift Guide

VIRGINIA  
CIDER  
WEEK  
2012



AUTUMN 2012





**I**T'S THE BREW-  
soccer league b  
rociouly deter  
executive.

Bill Butcher's prof  
steeped in wine, which  
scribes his 20-month-o  
ery as a winery that m  
eight years with Robert  
years as a founding pa  
Mondavi's Folio Wine C

But what he saw wh  
Capital Region was a p  
for more wine but for cr  
thy beers have cropped u  
alone in the field when h  
on Feb. 4, 2011—two d  
shut down the entire No

"About half of the peo  
our brewery thought it  
and the other half tho  
Butcher said. "I simply d  
one else thought. I cou  
product, knew exactly  
brewery to be, and I put t  
could help me build that

That team, by happen  
dozen local families.

"We had not planned  
investors," Butcher said.  
kids' soccer games, ch  
ents, and the subject of  
come up. I found that th  
of interest in the project,  
a few families join as par  
12 families that have inve  
They are all still involved  
to be great brand ambass

Head brewer Jonathan  
team. He was one of 150  
received the first week  
brewmaster. Reeves, a fr  
the Great American Bee



# Bringing Beer Back

## Port City Brewing Company

JESSICA STRELITZ

Photos by Lise Metzger

**I**T'S THE BREWERY that a kid's soccer league built—that, and a ferociously determined former wine executive.

Bill Butcher's professional roots are steeped in wine, which explains why he describes his 20-month-old Alexandria brewery as a winery that makes beer. He spent eight years with Robert Mondavi, and four years as a founding partner with Michael Mondavi's Folio Wine Company.

But what he saw when he assessed the Capital Region was a place calling out not for more wine but for craft brew. While worthy beers have cropped up since, Butcher was alone in the field when he opened his doors on Feb. 4, 2011—two days after a blizzard shut down the entire Northeast.

"About half of the people who I told about our brewery thought it was a cool project, and the other half thought I was crazy," Butcher said. "I simply didn't care what anyone else thought. I could see the finished product, knew exactly what I wanted the brewery to be, and I put together a team who could help me build that brewery."

That team, by happenstance, includes a dozen local families.

"We had not planned on taking outside investors," Butcher said. "I would be at my kids' soccer games, chatting with other parents, and the subject of the brewery would come up. I found that there was quite a bit of interest in the project, so we decided to let a few families join as partners. We now have 12 families that have invested in the brewery. They are all still involved, and they continue to be great brand ambassadors."

Head brewer Jonathan Reeves leads the team. He was one of 150 applicants Butcher received the first week he advertised for a brewmaster. Reeves, a five-time medalist at the Great American Beer Festival, came to

Port City with 17 years of brewing experience and quickly got to work.

Within six weeks of opening, Port City had 80 business accounts. Now, the chalkboard in the tasting room lists distribution to more than 600 restaurant and retail locations in four areas—Virginia, Maryland, D.C., and, new in 2012, North Carolina. Butcher is now talking with distributors in Pennsylvania and Delaware as well.

The brewery's name recalls the city's roots as a port and former major brewing center. By basing operations in his hometown—he's a fourth-generation Alexandrian—Butcher immediately became a stalwart of the burgeoning local craft beer movement.

Port City offers a tidy collection of beers year-round. Bestselling Optimal Wit is an unfiltered Belgian-style white flavored with coriander, orange peel, and peppery grains of paradise. The accessible Monumental IPA demonstrates layers of subtle citrus and caramel flavors, but isn't a victim of the "hop creep" that Butcher sees in other American craft beers. The flagship Porter exhibits traditional coffee and dark chocolate flavors, and the golden Essential Pale Ale is a light and fruitful option for a warm afternoon and a frosted mug.

Port City this year has also brewed a variety of seasonal and limited-edition beers including One, an Imperial Stout to celebrate the brewery's first anniversary; a copper-colored Scottish Ale called Tartan; and Revival Stout, made with oysters from War Shore Oyster Company on the Chesapeake.

The Oyster Stout follows Irish and British tradition. The entire oyster—shell, meat, and liquor—is part of the brewing process, creating a beer with a velvety mouth-feel and light minerality. Five percent of profits goes to oyster recovery efforts in the region.

The storm that knocked out power for a week this summer spawned a one-time only

special brew—a by-necessity warm fermented beer called the Derecho Common.

Port City produced 3,000 barrels in its first year, 20 percent more than Butcher's projections. He plans to double that level in 2012, thanks to two new 90-barrel fermenters that were delivered this spring. And Butcher's personal star is on the rise, too—he spoke at the Democratic National Convention representing small businesses.


Demand has prompted additional tours, which are now held four days a week—including four on Saturdays. The tasting room became so crowded with visitors and customers seeking growler fills on the weekends, Butcher remodeled the space to add a second bar.

"We have created a multi-sensory experience," he explains while leading a group of enthusiasts through Port City Brewing Company's 11,000-square-foot production and tasting space in Alexandria's industrial district, a few miles from Old Town.

"We let people handle the raw materials, smell and taste the hops, feel how chilly the cold room is and walk them through every step of the process before tasting the product at the end. It's a true ground-to-glass tour."

"We knew that people would try us once, because we are new, and local, but we also knew that if we weren't great quality, people would try us once and go back to drinking what they were drinking before," he said. "We knew that we had to be as good or better than the craft beer from everywhere else."

Though he loves being a beer-aficionado destination, he doesn't want people to treat Port City like a bar. "This isn't a place to sit and stay, it's a place to buy and go," said Butcher.

There are scores of local eateries with Port City on tap if you want to linger over a glass. 

**Port City Brewing Co.**

Portcitybrewing.com