

Ben's American Sake Announces First Annual American Craft Sake Fest

June 1 event features over 20 American-made sake varieties

Asheville, NC -- On June 1, Ben's American Sake Brewery and Ben's Tune Up in Asheville, NC will produce and host the first-ever American Craft Sake Fest. Admission is free and attendees will enjoy complimentary sake tastings, sake seminars, live music, and food and drink specials from 3-7pm.

Ben's American Sake, which is housed in the same converted auto shop as the local bar and live music venue Ben's Tune Up, was one of the first craft sake breweries to open in the United States. Co-owners Molly Clark and Meg Alt introduced sake to the South Slope neighborhood of Asheville at the peak of the city's craft beer fervor. Clark, who gained an appreciation for sake while living in San Francisco, is proud to offer American-made sake in her home state. "We wanted to create something unique and Asheville has been a wonderful place to experiment and grow."

As the number of American sake breweries increases, Ben's Head Brewer Patrick Shearer found himself wishing he could try them all in one place. "Having spent several years in Portland, OR where there are festivals for every type of food and drink you can imagine, it seemed to me that *someone* should do an American sake festival. Then I looked around at this great space Meg and Molly have created and realized- this is the perfect place to do it." While Shearer has not quite realized his dream of having *every* American sake brewery represented under one roof, he is excited to welcome North American Sake Brewery of Charlottesville, Proper Sake Co of Nashville, Brooklyn Kura of NYC, and Sequoia Sake of San Francisco to the inaugural festival, pouring more than 20 different sakes crafted right here in the United States. He expects those numbers to grow over time.

Shearer will celebrate a year at the helm of Ben's sake program just weeks before the American Craft Sake Fest. "This is the perfect way to round out my first year. I've been lucky in my career to experience the 'rising tide lifts all boats' ethos of the craft beer industry. I want Ben's to be a part of fostering that same sense of community among sake breweries - where we celebrate everyone's contribution and hopefully learn from each other as well." That drive towards community and education led the festival to partner with the newly formed Sake Brewers Association of North America to offer educational seminars during the event. Seminars are free to attend and a schedule will be available online. Additionally, aficionados and the sake-curious are encouraged to Meet The Brewers on the evening before the Fest, May 31, from 6-8pm. Participating brewers will congregate in the sake tasting room (formerly Ben's Penny Mart) to answer questions and lead tastings.

In what feels like a nod to the industry that paved the way for craft sake, the Fest coincides with Asheville Beer Week, a celebration that encompasses not just beer but the wide variety of craft beverages available across the city. Shearer laughs about the timing, "I wish we could say it was on purpose but honestly I was just trying to accommodate the schedules of the other sake

brewers. Once we realized our happy mistake, we decided to start a little later in the day to give folks the ability to hit both our event and Beer City Fest, which we are also participating in. It will be a busy weekend!" Of course, there will also be beer. In addition to the usual lineup of local craft beer, Ben's will offer 3 sake-beer collaborations with South Slope neighbors, Hi-Wire Brewing and Asheville Brewing Company.

Attendees can expect a wide range of offerings among the 20+ sakes available at the Fest- from the traditional to the experimental. "The interesting thing about making sake in the US" says Shearer, "is that most consumers are coming to it with almost no experience or expectations. As American sake brewers, we can create very traditional sake in keeping with what you might find in Japan- and we can also , well...get weird. We have a chocolate milk sake in the tasting room right now at Ben's. It's not something that traditionalists would even recognize as sake, although the base is a traditional Nigori- but it's fun and it's delicious. We can honor tradition while also creating something new, and that's what I hope to see celebrated as the event grows-there are just so many possibilities."

The inaugural American Craft Sake Fest promises to spread the gospel of sake in a way not yet seen in the United States. Shearer looks forward to sharing his passion with a broader audience. "We only have so much of each product to share, but there will be systems in place to make sure that as many people as possible get to try as many types of sake as possible. That's the whole idea-show folks that there's a lot more to sake than the cheap hot stuff in a sushi dive or sake bombs at karaoke- although those are fun too!"

Updates will be posted to facebook.com/benstuneupNC as the event approaches, including information on participating breweries, seminar topics and times, live music, and food specials.

About Ben's American Sake and Ben's Tune Up

Ben's Tune Up and Ben's American Sake are located in a converted auto shop in the South Slope neighborhood of Asheville, North Carolina. Ben's American Sake is among the first Sake Breweries to open in the United States and has been offering their unique take on the ancient Japanese drink to locals and travelers alike for more than five years.

Ben's Tune Up offers Asian-fusion fare and a full bar (including sake!) Monday through Friday 4pm to close and weekends 2pm to close. Next door, the sake tasting room is open weekdays 11am to close and weekends 12pm to close. Visit BensTuneUp.com for menus, current sake list, live music schedules and event listings.