Picaroons opens doors to new Fredericton craft brewer

Grimross beer is now being sold out of Picaroons's downtown Fredericton store

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Veteran craft beer producer Picaroons has extended the definition of Maritime hospitality by inviting a new brewer to share its space for free.

Picaroons has been operating since 1995 and the popular beer can be found in bars, liquor stores and from the company's brewtique in downtown Fredericton.

But now a unique partnership will see a beer brewed by Grimross Brewing Co., new craft beer company in Fredericton, sold alongside the popular Picaroons brands at the brewtique.

Stephen Dixon, the owner of Grimross Brewing Co., said he has turned his passion for craft beer into a new business. (CBC)

Stephen Dixon spent 20 years brewing his beer at home before he decided to take his product commercial.

Dixon said he feels Sean Dunbar, the owner of Picaroons, took the generosity that is common in the craft beer industry one step further.

"It's common that brewers will help brewers. It's not common that they'll actually open their doors and say, 'Hey, come on in and use my brewery to brew your beer,'" Dixon said.

Dunbar said he does not view Grimross as a competitor in the traditional business sense.

"For craft beer consumers, the more beer the better. We don't expect our customers to be brand loyal, we expect them to be category loyal," Dunbar said.

"To keep our customers interested in beer, there needs to be more and different beers introduced to them all the time."

Craft beer growing in popularity

Craft beer has gained in popularity since Picaroons's inception. The growth is part of Dixon's motivation to take his recipes public.

While his friends sampled his beer for decades, he thought others would like to try.

Sean Dunbar, the owner of Picaroons, has invited Dixon into his company's downtown Fredericton store to brew and sell Grimross beer. (CBC)

He tried to get Grimross off the ground 15 years ago and approached Dunbar, who was receptive to the idea.

"For one reason or another, it didn't happen back then," Dixon said.

He felt ready this time to pursue his dream of opening his own brewery.

"I just felt that I wanted to do it. I had a passion to do it and I wanted to figure out a way to make it happen. It was a feeling," he said.

Dunbar was there again to offer advice, support and a place to brew.

The Picaroons brewery on Fredericton's northside produces the company's beer, but the equipment in the downtown brewtique wasn't in use.

Cost is high to craft beer start-ups, so Picaroons took Grimross under its wing.

Despite bringing a new competitor into the market, Dunbar said the incubation business model he favours is good for both parties.

"I think a lot of businesses could accept somebody not just in a mentorship role, but actually allow them to set up shop in their buildings," Dunbar said.

"Why not share the space? I think only good things can happen from that."

Grimross started selling on Canada Day

Grimross is being sold out of the Picaroons Brewtique in downtown Fredericton. CBC

The first bottles of Grimross started being sold on Canada Day.

While Picaroons prides itself on its British-style ales, Dixon is inspired by beers from Belgium and southern France.

Grimross's first beer, Cheval D'Or, is described as a farmhouse ale.

Grimross will be drier and "a little bit more rustic," than most Picaroons beers, Dixon said.

Grains like spelt and rye give the beer a different taste.

The beer is being sold in 750 ml bottles and is only available at the Picaroons Brewtique.

Dixon said some restaurants have also agreed to sell his beer in the future.

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