Horse Farm attracts hoppy crowd for Gulf Brew

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Intoxicated revelers wearing pretzel necklaces swaggered from booth to booth across a grassy courtyard Saturday, sampling some of the regions finest malted beverages at the 2013 Gulf Brew, the yearly beer fest benefiting the Acadiana Center for the Arts.

Friday night’s rain dampened the ground but not the spirits at Lafayette’s Horse Farm, where beer enthusiasts ditched their muddy shoes and danced barefoot to the Cajun jams. Brewers from across the Gulf Coast convened to bring more than 120 different beers to the festival.

“This is the first time I’ve come,” stated Forrest Montgomery, a 22-year-old UL mechanical engineering senior at UL Lafayette. “I remember one year they had it at the ACA. I don’t know how they fit it in there.

“I’m not an aficionado,” he humbly admitted. “I’ve done a few homebrews. The first one’s always the worst, but they’re getting better.”

Montgomery said his favorite part of the festival was sampling the plethora of little homebrewers’ beers. The budding brewologist said he has been working on his own craft beverages and hoped to feature some of his work at next year’s event. He said his favorite sample of the day was the Dead Yeast Society’s hefferveisen, a wheat beer.

The DYS, Lafayette’s brew club, is an eclectic group of local enthusiasts who meet to discuss brewing techniques and teach newcomers the ropes. As a registered 501(c)(3), a tax-free charitable educational organization, the club’s membership dues and its purchased supplies can be claimed as tax writeoffs, explained James Lutgring, an oil-and-gas landman by day and homebrewer by night, as he stirred a giant pot of fresh wort.

“What we’re about to do is get this to boil and start throwing hops in it,” said Lutgring, the 34-year-old who mentioned he’s been brewing for 10 years. “Every year for the past five years, I’ve brewed at Gulf Brew. At the event, I brew a beer to serve the next year. This is an English barleywine. The beer I did last year is a bourbon vanilla imperial porter.”

Underneath the DYS tent, Lutgring had his MacGyver-esque portable brewing station in which he was brewing his batch for next year. He explained the fully automated, metal Frankenstein monster was made from an old double-burner gas range, a discarded bed frame and his own ingenuity.

“This is how I brew in my backyard,” he said with laugh. “I started from nothing, just little buckets and s—. I didn’t just build this in couple weeks.”

James Lutgring reignites the pilot light on his self-made brewing station made of an old, double-burner range and a bed frame. Lutgring brewed barleywine at the festival to serve at next year’s event.

Next to DYS was the homebrew tent, the focus of the festival. Inside, hundreds of people mosied from...
vendor to vendor, trying to sample as many beers as they could before supplies ran out.

“Beer, of course,” answered Thomas Burns, a fire paramedic from Mandeville, when asked what he had liked most at the festival. “I liked the flavors of the ciders and the fall fest in the homebrew tent, so far, from what I’ve been able to sample. It was disappointing that some of the vendors ran out.”

Burns, 44, said he drove two hours to attend the festival with his fiancee because there was nothing like it in his area. Although he wasn’t able to sample everything, he said the brisk weather made it a perfect evening for the outdoor event.

Kyra Knight, an office administrator and beer enthusiast from Lafayette who volunteered for the event, said the beer she was serving, Southern Tier Brewing Co.’s Pumking, was one of the first to run out.

“It’s like pumpkin pie and beer had a baby — that’s exactly what it tastes like,” explained Knight, 25. “Not all of them were good, though. There was one that was supposed to taste like chardonnay, but it tasted like finger nail polish remover.

“It was chocolatey,” she said, describing her favorite sample, Bayou Boys Brewing’s Tootsie Roll porter. “It was very dark but not heavy like Guinness is. It didn’t have a bitter finish; it was sweet all the way through.”

Slidell’s Bayou Boys Brewing was one of the many craft brewers slinging samples in the homebrewers’ tent. Owner Scott Peterson, who has participated the past four years, said festivals such as Gulf Brew help grow his new business. He said he spends much of his time on the road with his beer and his collection of tap handles, traveling from fest to fest sampling and selling his wares.

“I have a lot of people come to me and tell me they saw me at other festivals,” said Peterson. “Some of the brew club members that I belong to are also part of your club here, the Dead Yeast Society. It’s kind of a fraternity of homebrewers.

“I just love getting in there and interacting with the people,” he continued. “I brought homemade beer to showcase, free of charge, and gave up about 20 gallons of beer. I’ve been a strong supporter of the Acadiana Arts Festival for the last three years.”

Alumnus Josh Coen attends Gulf Brew with senior nursing senior Camille Veillon after winning two tickets to the beer festival through The Vermilion’s ticket giveaway.