

MICHIGAN BEER GUIDE

The Active Beer Drinker

By Brad Probert



Let's be honest, being a beer drinker can bring on feelings of guilt at times. TV commercials show us that super-fun, fit people can drink Michelob Ultra with all their pals while playing a great game of softball. But what if you like a beer with something more to it? The implication is by contrast you must not be healthy. However, there is a growing tide of athletic events out there to participate in AND enjoy your beer.

The psychology of why diet fads don't work is also relevant here. Deprivation is a negative emotion that tries to control your choices by threatening to make you feel guilty if you do something. Depending on your personality, this may work for you, or it may make you bail out of it because it's simply no fun. So the key to making healthy choices is making it fun. Rather than feeling bad about the calories you'd consume if you drank a beer, what if you decided to go exercise to burn calories and then drank that full-calorie IPA? Not only would you be happy you're not drinking a watered-down semblance of a beer, you might feel a bit upbeat about doing something healthy with your body by exercising.

Growing around us now are events that get you outdoors and active, and then pair you up with beer afterwards. These events are local and draw participants from their nearby areas. They appeal to locals, which is where locally made beer pairs nicely.

You can easily string together a series of these outdoor events to take you through the warm months, and some even through the winter. There are biking, running, and paddling events. Once you start looking for them, they seem to pop up all over. I started off the

warm season with Hightail to Ale. This is the first of a 3-event "Thirsty Three" that Running Fit Events puts on. Hightail to Ale is a 5k run (or walk) downtown Detroit in May. It starts and finishes at **Atwater Brewery**, and after the healthy workout everyone gets an Atwater beer while recovering and listening to the live band play. This was their 2nd year, and after selling out with 3600 entrants in 2014, they upped it to 4500 entrants and sold out again. Asking Mandy Hetfield of Running Fit Events about the pairing of beer after the run, she explained, "Runners seem to love craft brew so this seemed like a good incentive to get them to stick around! There are many craft beer fans who are not runners and they signed up for Hightail to Ale 5K to come hang with their friends. Bam....we just tricked them into 3 miles before the party."



Hightail to Ale 5k run at Atwater Brewery

In August, Mt. Brighton hosted a Spokes & Ale Fest, which combined a mountain bike race down their ski-hill-turned-bike course with a mini Michigan beer festival added for good measure. Paddle Antrim Festival took place in September, where kayakers covered 45 miles of inland lakes and waterways in northern Michigan across two days. This of course was topped off by a party sponsored by **Short's** in Elk Rapids on the final night. Ultimate Fun Runs held a 5k Great Beer Run in Northville that took runners down a course through Hines Park and returned us to a BBQ festival downtown where each runner got to fill their 16 oz. commemorative pint glass with their choice of some **Roak Brewing** beers on tap.

Early October was the 2nd Annual Gears and Beers. It was a 15 mile biking bar crawl through downtown Detroit that started off on Belle Isle where groups of riders left in waves,

following a laid out tour of some lesser-known, but great watering holes through the city. There were also options for shorter or longer tours. Biking in our group of 100+ riders; it felt a bit like Tour de France with ride organizers blocking traffic on side streets as we rolled through en masse, on our way to the next bar. Of course, it was far less serious, as each stop had beer samples for us, and the whole thing wrapped up with a party at the pavilion on Belle Isle with more beer, food, and music.

If winter's more to your taste, **Bell's Brewery** sponsors the Iceman Cometh Challenge, which is a 30-mile mountain bike race from Kalkaska to Traverse City on the first Saturday of November. Although this is geared more toward the serious biker, there is a shorter 8-mile version - both of which are followed by a Bell's beer after party. Also in

November, The Great Beer Run takes place on the grounds of Grand Traverse Resort and Spa on a cool Saturday morning on the 14th. To compensate for the cold weather, not only do all entrants get a knitted beard beanie, but there will be 3 beer stations set up within the 5k course- serving beers from **Beards Brewery**, **Short's Brewery** and **Right Brain Brewery**. And immediately after there will of course be a beer tent with more Michigan beer, food, and music.

Lastly, any story that talks about combining outdoor running with beer drinking would be remiss without mentioning the Hash House Harriers. This is an international group of running clubs that get together for the benefit of outdoor exercise, combined with socializing and beer. Self-described as "a drinking club with a running problem," clubs hold running events following made up trails marked by chalk along the ground. Trails lead runners to various beer way-stations along the way, and to an after party at the end of the run. The international group has a history stretching back to 1938, and there are local clubs in several Michigan cities.

So next time you're patting your belly and thinking maybe you should switch back to Miller Lite, instead go register for one of these events, start training, and then crack open a Bigfoot Barleywine (330 calories). **MBG**