

Smartphone Beer Tool

Story and photo by Brad Probert

Bank of America published results of a survey this past June where they queried Americans about the importance of their smartphone. People responded that their smartphone, their car, and their deodorant all held equal importance to them. The youngest adults (age 18-24) actually found their smartphone more important than their deodorant (be warned). As the majority of Americans own a smartphone, odds are that you've got one in your pocket, and it turns out there are some good ways to put this tool to use to enhance your beer enjoyment. I've collected a range of uses below for you to see if any would help make your cell phone the right tool for the job.

Forget whatever pre-conceived notions you may have that Twitter is just a time-wasting app for teenagers and movie stars. You can tailor it to your own needs. For the uninitiated, you basically pick a few people/businesses/organizations you want to "follow," and whenever they "tweet" something, it fills up a chronological log in your newsfeed. You pick who you follow based on if they have interesting things to say or web links to share. After some trial and error exploring, you can find a good list of breweries, distributors, liquor stores, and organizations to fill your newsfeed with useful info. You can keep up to date on new beer bar openings, festival ticket sales, the latest beer showing up at your local store, etc. It's an easy way to be someone who always knows the latest scoop on craft beer in your area.

There are a number of different apps you can download that let you log your beer explorations. I've tried a number of them, and spending \$1.99 on Beer+ from Metosphere a few years ago has led to some great chronicling for me. It lets you categorize the beer type, brewery, give it a rating, add some notes, and take a picture. This is a love/hate relationship though, as I love the ability to look up all of the IPAs I've had and give a friend a list of my highest rated ones. But I hate the tediousness of it while trying to relax and enjoy a beer with friends and record notes if it's a new beer. Users will need to find their own balance.

Untapped is like the Facebook of beer



database, give it a star rating, add where you had it, and any comments you want to add. If your friends are also Untapped users, you can get a newsfeed of their beer explorations. That's the Facebook side. I use it as a type of Angie's List by looking at any activity near me (via phone's GPS). By doing that, I discover new places that have a good craft beer menu, and I also learn which places near me may have craft on tap but do a poor job of cleaning

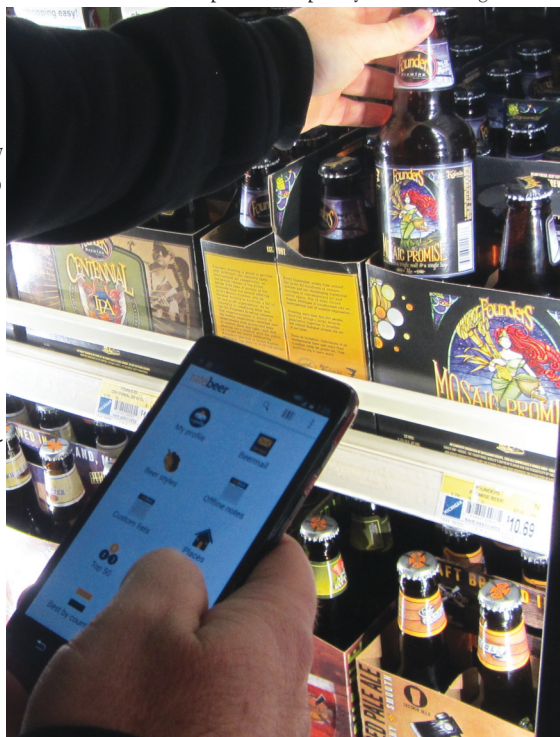
drinking, but can also be used like the Angie's List of beer drinking. Like many of these apps, you can use it in different ways. The basics are when you drink a beer somewhere, you pull it up from the

website link (www.freshbeeronly.com) you should have on your smartphone. Just go to the menu link while on the website on your phone's browser and ask to make a shortcut. Then while in the store you click on it and you get an alphabetic list by brewery that tells you where to find and decode the date code on the bottle. Those few moments can save you from weeks looking at that stale 5-pack in your fridge that's been abandoned after you discovered that a year of sitting on the shelf in the store helped bring out the wet cardboard flavor.

Beer Mode is for those who think the best thing to do with your cell phone while drinking a beer is exactly nothing. This simple app from **New Belgium Brewing** is slick. You give it your Facebook and Twitter logins, tell it how long you want to be "off the grid," then pick from a set of pre-written postings with different personalities. From there, the app will make posts to your Twitter and Facebook making it appear to others that you're still plugged in. It even has the ability to reply to people that commented on the posts the app made on your behalf.

SipSnapp is a new app, and is currently only available on iPhones, with the Android version under development. Since I don't have an iPhone, I can only describe what I saw from their website. With the app, you take a photo of the beer menu in front of you, then it goes out to RateBeer.com and pulls down the specs on the beers listed there along with their ratings. If it works as good as their Youtube video leads you to believe, this could be a great tool for those out of state trips where you're greeted with a menu full of unknown beers.

To close this off with a safe trip home, Uber is handy after a night of exploring the draft list at your favorite multi-tap. Uber puts you in touch with their network of drivers. You enter your location (address or via GPS), type in where you want to go, and it will tell you how much it will cost you and how long before a car will be there. You can even pull up a map to see real-time GPS location of Uber drivers near you. Payment is all handled electronically via your account so you don't even need to have that debate of how much money to hold back from your bar tab to afford the fare home. **MBG**



their lines because they get a lot of bad reviews.

You probably have used or are aware of the RateBeer website. The phone app lets you look up beers and all the same stuff they have on the web, but one cool addition: they have a barcode scanner that lets you scan a beer's barcode, and it pulls down that beer from the database with all of the info. Of course, ratings are a matter of personal taste, but it can still be a handy tool when exploring something new you find in the store.

Fresh Beer Only isn't an app, but it's a