

# Molly Wellmann partnering with Northern Row Brewery & Distillery on Cincinnati Gin



By [Andy Brownfield](#) – Senior staff reporter, Cincinnati Business Courier Apr 14, 2023

Cincinnati mixologist Molly Wellmann is partnering with Krohn Conservatory and a local distillery to launch her own liquor. Molly Wellmann is releasing her Cincinnati Gin on April 28 at the Northern Row Brewery & Distillery in Over-the-Rhine, whose Five Stories Distillery is producing the spirit, using botanical ingredients from, and inspired by Krohn Conservatory. "It's the Cincinnati girl – me – with a Cincinnati distillery using botanicals from a Cincinnati gem," Wellmann told me. "We have a really cool history making gin in Cincinnati." Cincinnati Gin came together after Wellmann and Northern Row head distillery Josh Quattlebaum were given a tour of Krohn Conservatory by Manager Mark House. He showed off the different plants and botanicals in the conservatory that were edible.

"That tour felt like the first time I'd ever been to Krohn Conservatory, even though I'd been there 1,000 times," Wellmann said. The gin is made with some botanicals sourced directly from Krohn Conservatory, and others sourced locally where the conservatory wasn't able to produce enough for use in distilling.

By law, all gins must contain juniper in order to be called gin. Wellmann said hers has 50% juniper and is ginger-forward with notes of mandarin peel underneath. The gin is rounded off with cocoa nibs and vanilla. Lime leaf and bay leaf are used to bring out the floral notes of the juniper. "All of the other botanicals in it are important because they cover up some of the flavor of juniper, and then bring out other flavors of juniper," she said. "It's like painting a picture, but with flavor. I think gin is beautiful in that way." Cincinnati Gin will initially be sold in select retailers around Cincinnati:

Wellmann said Northern Row is working on distributing all its products, including Cincinnati Gin, in Kentucky. The gin's label was created by Cincinnati artist Robin Carnes. Wellmann is a longtime fixture of Cincinnati's bar scene, owning establishments like the Famous Neon's Unplugged, Japp's Since 1879, Old Kentucky Bourbon Bar, Myrtle's Punch House, Melt and Bottle & Basket. She sold her last bar, Japp's, to Four Entertainment Group (4EG) in July 2022.

# Cerveceria Ortega Is Alive, Cincy Brewing Company is, well... not.

April 15, 2023 The Gnarly Gnome

Cincy Brewing Company posted on its Facebook page in late January that they would start some renovations. For anyone who frequented the taproom, I'm sure that news is just as exciting as it was for me. If you haven't been, these guys took over the old Rivertown space in Lockland, which is a little, uhhhh... "old school".

When you show up at Cincy Brewing Company and sit down for a pint, the physical bar is a little higher than you expect, if you show up during the summertime, the space is a little warmer than expected. When you head to the bathroom, expect to take a while if you want your hands dry, those hand driers feel like they're powered by a hamster running on a wheel. It's a place filled with little things that are all just a little shy of being great. In short, it's what you remember about a lot of those warehouse-style taprooms from 20 years ago.

A renovation is an exciting thing.

Early February came and with a post that Cincy Brewing Company would be closed for the entirety of the month to finish up these big renovations – and then nothing. No more has ever been posted to the Cincy Brewing Company account.

## The Sale

Sometime after the renovations started, there was word out from a consultant involved with a new project that Cincy Brewing was no more, and a new place would be opening up in its location. Cerveceria Ortega. This was going to be a brewery that focused on Mexican-style beers, specifically Mexican lagers.

In fact, if you look at their unfinished website, they tout a brewery that makes authentic "Mexican cervezas" – and they tell us that they are going to be Cincinnati's only Cerveceria. The word was that the new brewery, sorry, Cerveceria, was looking for a head brewer to come in and craft these Mexican cervezas. There wasn't an opening date planned, but the writing was clearly on the wall – Cincy Brewing Company was closed, and the business had been sold.

Most of the folks that I talked to were understandably doubtful about this new project. A lot of folks were putting their metaphorical money on the Cerveceria not ever actually opening, and things just closing down quietly for good.

Guess what? They were at least a little bit wrong. Cerveceria Ortega is in the middle of a long soft opening phase. They're open. There's a new beer (at least one... not a Mexican lager, though). You know that I had to stop in and check it out, right?

## A New Brewery – Sort Of.

I say *sort of* when I call this a new brewery because it's certainly a new business. New owners, a new name, a new theme. They definitely want to put their own spin on things. I also say *sort of* because it definitely feels and looks a lot like Cincy Brewing Company. The beers *currently* on tap are the same ones (with one exception) that you are probably familiar with. Heck, even their brewer ended up being Jeff who decided to stay on after the sale of the company (he was one of the folks that brewed when Cincy Brewing Company was in operation).

Speaking long-term, things will definitely keep evolving, but for now? It feels a lot like you remember it feeling like before.

That's not to say that there aren't quite a few differences that you'll notice, too. ~~The bar is certainly a bit bigger.~~ Strike that, they added on to the bar, and it's massive. They wrapped it all around the cooler that was behind it before and then added a large u-section that extends out

into the back part of the taproom with the stage and a pool table. The taproom space feels like it's bigger than it was before, even though it's not.

There's also something else that I have to mention, that isn't really great stuff if you're a craft beer fan.

## The Modelo, Oh, the Modelo

I get it before you say anything. If the idea of Cerveceria Ortega is to showcase Mexican lagers it shouldn't be very surprising that every single other person in the room aside from us was sitting around drinking cans of Modelo. If, however, the idea of Cerveceria Ortega is to showcase Mexican-style beers *that they brew there* – they're going to have a really big hill to climb. It's going to be really hard to break the habits of the people that are filling the room currently.

I don't think many places will be able to brew a beer that not only tastes comparable to Modelo but that is also going to be able to do it and make the price comparable to a \$4 or \$5 can of it. You have a couple of options... stop selling Modelo, risk pissing the people off that have gotten used to expecting it there – or start brewing a bunch of stuff that fits the theme, but stands out with a personality that just can't be matched by a macro lager.

## Booze, Cocktails, The Real Solution

While the cocktail I ordered was a little expensive at \$13, it shows the side of things that Cerveceria Ortega really needs to be leaning into. I think (and I could be wrong) that the real solution for these folks is to stop selling Modelo and other cheap macro beer – convince folks to drink the beer that is brewed there or to order a cocktail. There are a TON of great cocktails with Tequila, Rum, Cachaca, and even Bourbon that fit into the theme of the new space perfectly. If you double down on a great cocktail program, make them cheap – approachable, refreshing, and easy to make... you can absolutely make a killing.



## I'll Be Back... And You Can Check Them Out Too

This is an extended soft open of sorts for Cerveceria Ortega... and with that, they have pretty limited hours right now. You can visit them from 4 pm-2 am on Friday and Saturday and from 2 pm-10 pm on Sundays. I expect that over time that will change as they settle into things.

The space is clean, the people are nice... it's a fine little bar but needs to grow into itself. I'll definitely be back, and I'll keep you updated on how they are growing!

# Anderson Township's Wandering Monsters Brewing adds Zac Boehnke as head brewer



Zac Boehnke is head brewer at Wandering Monsters Brewing.

By Andy Brownfield – Senior staff reporter, Cincinnati Business Courier Apr 18, 2023

An upcoming East Side craft brewery has hired a local industry veteran to head up its brewing operations. Wandering Monsters Brewing, which is opening this summer at 8251 Beechmont Ave. in Anderson Township, has brought on Zac Boehnke as its head brewer.

Boehnke most recently served as the lead innovation brewer at Braxton Brewing Co. He led Braxton Labs, the brewery's division devoted to pushing the envelope with creative beers. In that role he led the creation of more than 200 beers over six years.

Prior to joining Braxton, where he started as a staff brewer in 2015, he worked as a sales representative for Lexington's West Sixth Brewing.

Boehnke in a Q&A posted to Facebook said the first beer going into the tanks at Wandering Monsters will be its house blonde ale, followed by a hazy IPA. He said his favorite styles to brew are whatever he's brewing for the first time. "It's always fun to do something new and to have to pay close attention and adjust things along the way," he said. "Strictly by style, I'd have to say a hazy IPA."

Wandering Monsters is a brewery being opened by another longtime veteran of the industry, the aptly named Jason Brewer. Brewer spent more than a decade at Evanston's Listermann Brewing Co.

Wandering Monsters will take up 11,800 square feet in Anderson Township. Nearly half of that once was Game Anderson, a now-shuttered sports bar. The brewery's taproom will take over that space, which will have a lounge and communal beer garden tables.

Brewer also is taking over an adjoining 6,000 square feet, which will house a 10-barrel brew system, six lanes of duckpin bowling and a private event space with barrel storage for barrel-aging beer.

Brewer said the total project cost for Wandering Monsters is \$1.5 million, which was financed between a mixture of U.S. Small Business Administration loans and investors. Over-the-Rhine creative firm Indio handled the design and architecture and CMSquared is doing the build-out. Lemon Grenade Creative did Wandering Monster's branding.

Connor Fahrnbach and Justin Rex of Colliers represented the landlord in the lease with Wandering Monster.

# Blue Ash's Fretboard Brewing releasing Fretboard Light, taking on beer giants



By [Andy Brownfield](#) – Senior staff reporter, Cincinnati Business Courier Apr 14, 2023

Craft beer has come full circle: A local craft brewery is releasing its own light beer in hopes of taking market share from brewing giants like Anheuser-Busch and Molson Coors.

Blue Ash's Fretboard Brewing is releasing Fretboard Light, a craft light lager, in mid-June, taking square aim at some of the most popular beers in America such as Bud Light and Miller Lite. "I believe light (beer) is something on the verge of blowing up," Fretboard partner Kevin Moreland told me. "The younger folks just getting into the drinking age want something lighter. They're outdoors people, they're health conscious." Light beers are among the most popular in America. According to beer industry analytics firm Beer Marketer's Insights, four of the top five best-selling beer brands were light lagers in 2022:

1. Bud Light
2. Budweiser
3. Miller Lite
4. Coors Light
5. Michelob Ultra

The trend toward lower-calorie beers or malt beverages made with fewer carbs has been ongoing for years but seen mostly in the production of hard seltzers or so-called session beers. Moreland, whose resume includes head brewer at Listermann Brewing Co. and co-founder of Taft's Ale House, has made lagers a focus of his career. He said Fretboard had been brewing a light lager called Acoustic Light for the past two years, and over that time it has risen to become its second-best selling beer in retail and its fifth-best in taproom sales.

Fretboard Light is an outgrowth of that, with a refined formula and a major push in retail. While all mass-market light lagers are made with ingredients like corn syrup or rice, Moreland said Fretboard leaned into the craft category by using the same malt it uses in other lagers. "Light beer is hard to make. There's nothing to hide behind, like adding in a bunch of hops," he said. "It has to be perfect. I've worked harder on this than any other beer in my career."

In a further attempt at competing directly with macrobreweries, Fretboard is releasing Fretboard Light in large formats and at pricing comparable to mass-market light beers: 15 packs of cans at a suggested retail price of \$15.99 and 24 packs of cans at \$23.99.

Moreland didn't name specific companies but said some of the largest retailers in the Cincinnati region will be carrying Fretboard Light this summer. The beer clocks in at 4% alcohol by volume with 99 calories and 4.5 carbs. "There is not another local craft brewery that can tell you those line items," Moreland said.

2022

# TOP 50 U.S. CRAFT BREWING COMPANIES



● = multiple company locations

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 D. G. Yuengling & Son, Inc, Pottsville, PA                    | 25 Troëgs Brewing Co, Hershey, PA                          |
| 2 Boston Beer Co, Boston, MA / Milton, DE                       | 26 Summit Brewing Co, St. Paul, MN                         |
| 3 Sierra Nevada Brewing Co, Chico, CA                           | 27 Narragansett Brewing Co, Providence, RI                 |
| 4 Duvel Moortgat, Paso Robles, CA                               | 28 Craft Ohana, Kihei, HI / San Diego, CA                  |
| Kansas City, MO / Cooperstown, NY                               | 29 August Schell Brewing Co, New Ulm, MN                   |
| 5 Gambrinus, Shiner, TX / Berkeley, CA                          | 30 Kings & Convicts Brewing/Ballast Point, San Diego, CA   |
| 6 Artisanal Brewing Ventures, Downingtown, PA                   | 31 Pittsburgh Brewing Co, Pittsburgh, PA                   |
| Lakewood, NY / Brooklyn, NY                                     | 32 Alaskan Brewing Co, Juneau, AK                          |
| 7 Stone Brewing Co, Escondido, CA                               | 33 Kona Brewing Co, Kailua-Kona, HI                        |
| 8 CANarchy, Longmont, CO / Tampa, FL / Salt Lake City, UT       | 34 Flying Dog Brewery, Frederick, MD                       |
| Comstock, MI / Dallas, TX                                       | 35 Abita Brewing Co, Covington, LA                         |
| 9 Tilray Beer Brands, Atlanta, GA / Montauk, NY / San Diego, CA | 36 Fiddlehead Brewing, Shelburne, VT                       |
| 10 Brooklyn Brewery, Brooklyn, NY                               | 37 Creature Comforts Brewing Co, Athens, GA                |
| 11 Deschutes Brewery, Bend, OR                                  | 38 BrewDog Brewing Company, Canal Winchester, OH           |
| 12 New Glarus Brewing Co, New Glarus, WI                        | 39 Revolution Brewing, Chicago, IL                         |
| 13 Athletic Brewing Co, Milford, CT                             | 40 Lost Coast Brewery, Eureka, CA                          |
| 14 Matt Brewing Co, Utica, NY                                   | 41 Rogue Ales Brewery, Newport, OR                         |
| 15 Minhas Craft Brewery, Monroe, WI                             | 42 Surly Brewing Co, Minneapolis, MN                       |
| 16 Harpoon Brewery, Boston, MA                                  | 43 Ninkasi Brewing Co, Eugene, OR                          |
| 17 Gordon Biersch Brewing Co, San Jose, CA                      | 44 Saint Arnold Brewing Co, Houston, TX                    |
| 18 Great Lakes Brewing Co, Cleveland, OH                        | 45 IndieBrew, Atlanta, GA / Nashville, TN                  |
| 19 Stevens Point Brewery, Stevens Point, WI                     | 46 Shipyard Brewing Co, Portland, ME                       |
| 20 Allagash Brewing Co, Portland, ME                            | 47 Jack's Abby Brewing, Framingham, MA                     |
| 21 Georgetown Brewing Co, Seattle, WA                           | 48 North Coast Brewing Co Inc, Fort Bragg, CA              |
| 22 Odell Brewing Co, Fort Collins, CO                           | 49 Pizza Port Brewing Company, Carlsbad, CA                |
| 23 Rhinegeist Brewery, Cincinnati, OH                           | 50 Made by the Water, New Orleans, LA / Apalachicola, FL / |
| 24 Three Floyds Brewing Co, Munster, IN                         | Asheville, NC / Charleston, SC                             |

BrewersAssociation.org

An American craft brewer is a small and independent brewer  
 \*The above companies met the craft brewer definition for all or part of 2022.



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