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March First ready to open taproom, restaurant at Fountain Square

By Liz Engel – Staff reporter, Cincinnati Business Courier Aug 2, 2023

Craft beer is making its return to Fountain Square following a three-year absence as one of the region's largest breweries readies to open its newest location in the city's center. March First, a brand first born in Sycamore Township in 2017, will officially open a taproom and restaurant at 10 Fountain Square Plaza at 11 a.m. **Thursday, Aug. 10.** The brewing and distilling company is taking over 10,000 square feet of the former Rock Bottom Brewing space, which closed in 2020 following a 24-year run. The revamped venue features a nearly 40-tap bar for craft beer and seltzers, food options for lunch and dinner – including brick-fired pizzas and shareables like wings, meatballs and nachos – and more than 40 TVs. A Cincinnati Distilling bourbon bar, named Laveau, will offer a separate menu. Its debut will lag the brewery's by a few weeks, but the space will carry a New Orleans, Bourbon Street and Creole/Cajun vibe with high-end cocktails (Cincinnati Distilling is one of several March First brands). Josh Engel, a company spokesman, said March First considered the location a “no-brainer” when originally courted by Fifth Third Bancorp., the building's owner. Fountain Square is considered the heart of downtown – a host to concerts, food truck rallies, salsa dance nights, political demonstrations, lunches, post-game hangouts and more. A craft beer option, however, has seemed a missing link, he said. “A lot of people migrate to OTR (Over-the-Rhine) and the breweries up there, so bringing something like this back to the heart of the city is cool,” Engel told me. “The opportunity was there, and we look forward to plugging into what's already happening here.” Overall buildout of the space topped \$1 million, Engel said. Construction started in earnest this winter. The main area is split into two sides, including one for full-service dining and another that's more casual, where visitors can order from the bar or using QR codes at the table. Here, March First will cater more to the sports crowd. A separate room off the bar can be used for smaller private events or business meetings. The space is anchored by a large video screen, while floor-to-ceiling windows can open up to Fountain Square. March First will launch with a staff of 100-150. Inside, there's seating for roughly 250-300 people with additional tables outside. Menu wise, Engel said, March First will serve up typical bar fare. Brianna Schulte is helping the kitchen as executive chef. Pizza is sold either whole or by the slice. There's a pepperoni and honey pie, a chicken bacon ranch and a prosciutto and tomato, which includes garlic oil cheese, prosciutto, roasted tomatoes, arugula and a tomato jam drizzle. There's also salads, sandwiches, and burgers. Bowls include the Three Sisters, a grain mix with white bean, squash, corn and potato stew, house pickles, roasted chickpeas, and fresh herbs; and a mac 'n cheese option, made with cavatappi macaroni, collard greens, cornbread croutons, pickled jalapeños and tossed chicken tenders. For Laveau, the menu still under development. The fare will be New Orleans-inspired. Louisiana native Mark Swisshelm is serving as executive chef for that space. Laveau borrows its name from Marie Laveau, who was known as the queen of voodoo. That theme plays heavily into the design. “The space is more intimate, more serious,” Engel said. The bourbon bar will have access from Sixth Street and will feature a full-service bottle shop with offerings from the entire Cincinnati Distilling portfolio. Engel said March First will brew in small amounts on site. The idea is to try out some more experimental beers. “We want to be a one-stop shop,” he said. Thomas Neltner, head of enterprise workplace services at Fifth Third, said March First fits the vision the bank had for what it's calling the Eateries at Fifth Third on Fountain Square. The Eateries will also include a City Bird, one of Thunderdome's fast-casual concepts, which is slated to open in the coming months, he said. “The vibrancy, innovation and cuisine of March First combined with a great new venue and the vision of (March First CEO) Mark Stuhldreier and his team is exactly what we were looking to bring to the city center,” Neltner said. “This represents a fantastic option for families and friends to gather to enjoy Fountain Square and all the experiences downtown has to offer.” For March First, the Fountain Square project caps a recent growth streak. The company has not only grown at its original Sycamore Township location on Kemper Road, but it acquired Middletown's FigLeaf Brewing Co. in 2019 and East Walnut Hills-based Woodburn Brewing in December 2020. In between, the company rebranded its fast-growing hard seltzer line to Astra. In 2022, it renovated the historic Millcroft Inn space in Milford for its Cincinnati Distilling arm. The location includes a full-service restaurant, cocktail bar, bakery, bottle shop, art gallery, a basement speakeasy, private dining space and more. Engel said March First continues to look for opportunities to expand. The company currently ranks as the region's fourth-largest craft brewery. It's also one of the area's fastest-growing private companies. March First reported \$8.7 million in revenue in 2022, up 302% from \$2.2 million in 2020. March First Fountain Square will open from 11 a.m.-11 p.m. daily with extended hours from 11 a.m.-midnight on Fridays and Saturdays.



Twelve Packs of Cincy Light is here!

Cincy Light (4.2%), Cincinnati's Light Lager, is hitting shelves all over the city in cans starting next week! Crisp and easy drinking, this refreshingly simple lager hits the spot when celebrating a win or enjoying what the Queen City has to offer. To find Cincy Light cans near you, head over to the [Beer Finder](#) on our website. You can also catch it on draft at locations all over the city. Stay tuned for more info on Cincy Light throughout the year!

Saber Tooth Imperial IPA returns!

The Imperial IPA that started it all, this wily wildcat has been pouncing on hopheads since its initial release. Intensely hoppy yet sneakily drinkable, Saber Tooth Tiger (8.5%) roars with notes of papaya, mango and peach, finishing with crisp, clean citrus bitterness. Keep an eye out for the new, limited Saber Tooth Tiger cans on shelves near you now! To find Saber Tooth Tiger, head over to the [Beer Finder](#) on our website.

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Going on Now Through Sunday

Enjoy these Cincinnati Made Beers
with all of the amazing Goetta dishes.



Monday 4-10
 Tuesday 4-9
 Wednesday 4-9
 Thursday 4-10
 Friday 3-11
 Saturday 12-11
 Sunday 12-8

AUGUST SPECIAL EVENTS

8.3 National IPA Day

\$1 off West Coast IPA 4-6

8.4 International Beer Day

\$1 off Beers 4-6

8.13 13th of the Month Celebration

\$1 off Beers 4-6, 13% off Merchandise

8.14 St. Arnold's Day

\$1 off Belgian Beers 4-6

8.17 Bengals Themed Last Call Trivia Flex 7-9

8.21-27 Cincinnati Wing Week at the Incline Smoke Shack*

*WEEKLY INCLINE SMOKE SHACK SPECIALS WILL NOT APPLY THIS WEEK

Food By



No Outside
Food Allowed

**Catering for
Parties Available!**

Dog Friendly
#DogsOf13Below



Family Friendly



Children must be
supervised
by an adult
at all times

WEEKLY EVENTS

Monday

Railroad Special

\$1 off Beers for the 1/2 Hour After a Train Passes the Taproom

\$5 Pulled Pork Sandwich & Select \$4 Draft!*

Bachelorette Watch Party 8-10* Ends 8/21

Tuesday

\$5 Burger & Select \$4 Draft!*

Wednesday

Hump Day Happy Hour

\$1 off Beers 4-6

5 Wings for \$5 & Select \$4 Draft!*

Thursday

Last Call Trivia Flex

Trivia Night Starts at 7

Saturday

Samplin' Saturday

Order a Pint and Flight and get \$1 off each 12-3

Sunday

\$13* Growler Fills

*16 for Wedding Day *64 oz. Growlers



We're happy to announce that [Grainworks Brewing Company](http://www.grainworksbeer.com) of West Chester, OH is back and raring to go for the 2023 Steinholding season and they'll be hosting an Ohio State Championship Tournament Qualifier! They are kicking off the festival and Oktoberfest season RIGHT with the Grainworks Oktoberfest party and Ohio Qualifying Steinholding competition event on August 5th, 2023!

You can expect hot Steinholding action and cold beers, including their "Helles Real" Helles style lager (our favorite style 🍻) which was voted as Cincinnati's Favorite Beer for 2023 in a @Enquirer - Cincinnati and Kentucky poll! Cincinnati knows its beer, so that's a truly impressive endorsement and well-deserved! For more info on the State Championship program, check out our Ohio Steinholding page linked in our profile or here:

<http://www.ussteinholding.com/.../ohio-state-steinholding...>

