

Guide to St. Louis Craft Beer Destinations

Dogtown Edition

Once upon a time...I remember in college when I thought Bud Light was the only beer I would ever want. What can I say? When I was a child I...thought like a child, I reasoned like a child, but I have thrown away my childish ways. I discovered craft breweries and haven't looked back. Together with friends and like-minded people (Great Minds Drink Alike!) we've enjoyed watching and experiencing the birth, growth and evolution of the St. Louis craft beer industry. We now live 1100 miles from St. Louis. We get "home" a couple of times a year and are happy to share some insights.

This guide is written with Dogtown as the epicenter, for guests at our Dogtown AirBnB near West Park and Tamm, but may be useful from other starting points as well! It's purely our opinions and experiences, including local lore that hasn't been rigorously researched.

A Very Brief History of St. Louis Brewing: The early German immigrants brought their brewing traditions to St. Louis in the 19th century, with as many as 50 breweries operating in the city at one point. In 1919, on the eve of prohibition, two to three dozen were still in operation. In late 1933 the 21st amendment repealed prohibition and started the tappers flowing again. Only two breweries remained: Falstaff and Anheuser Busch (known locally as simply A-B).

Fast forward to 1991, when legislative changes allowed The St. Louis Brewing company to open Schlafly Brewery and Tap room, thus becoming the first brewery to open in St. Louis since Prohibition. Over the next 30 years, the St. Louis craft beer scene grew—slowly at first, then more rapid. In 2008, InBev international corporation bought A-B and Schlafly became the largest **locally owned** brewery in town. (I happened to be eating dinner at the Tap Room that night and was delighted at the sight of owner, Tom Schlafly hopping up onto the bar to deliver one of his trademark poems!)

With the loss of A-B's local headquarters, many corporate executives retired from Big Beer and infused the local craft scene with knowledge, talent, and cash. As of this writing, Google tells me there are 65 Breweries in the St. Louis area. This document concentrates on the dozen (give or take) in the central corridor between Downtown and Maplewood.

For a more extensive history click [here](#).

*I met a woman with one leg who worked at a brewery.
She was in charge of the hops.*

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The Local Rules of Engagement:

I realize that different states and localities can have some pretty strange laws around the brewing industry. St. Louis is not too restrictive. I'll try to capture the rules I've come across. In addition to the breweries themselves, local beers and ales are available at restaurants all around town. There are no "dry" areas. Many breweries also serve food, but it is not a requirement. Others host rotating food trucks or pop-up restaurants.

Most breweries make their product available for home consumption in bottles, cans, growlers or kegs. Bottles and cans are may also be available wherever beer is sold (which includes grocery stores in Missouri!)

There are no legal limits on the amount of beer you can consume on premises, however bartenders and servers may exercise their right to refuse service to anyone. While there may be limits to the amount of product you can take home from a brewery in St. Louis, I haven't run up against it, yet.

Most bars in St. Louis must close by 1:00 AM. I remember being in a pub in Ireland at closing time when they closed the blinds and dimmed the lights and told us to SHHHHH! When the local police drove by. That's not how it works here. Most craft breweries close well before 1 AM. Hours and days of operation vary widely, especially under COVID and resulting labor shortages. Check web sites or Facebook to know what to expect. One welcome addition that was influenced by COVID was the creation of outdoor patios and beer gardens. Here's hoping they stick around!

Most places will let you try before you buy for beers on tap, as long as you don't abuse the privilege. Be smart. Plan your excursion. Designate a driver (In my family, we find that nieces and nephews between 16 and 20 and pregnant women work well 😊!) Or use Uber or Lyft; the areas included in this guide should have responsive drivers. Weather and special events can have an impact.

*A Roman walks into a bar. Holds up two fingers.
Says "Five beers, please!"*



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IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD (Dogtown):

Heavy Riff Brewing Company 6314 Clayton Ave.

www.heavyriffbrewing.com



This is at the top of the list because it is a short 5-minute walk from your temporary home AND because they have a quite nice, well-rounded selection of very good beers as well as a satisfying food menu. When last there, the parking lot, which had been repurposed and tented as a COVID-inspired patio had been torn out. Plans were well-underway for a large, all-season covered patio. It should be in use by Summer 2022.

The Beers: From Pilsners, Lagers and Wheats, through Sours, Pales, IPAs (mainly the Hazy New England variety) and onto Browns, Stouts and a Porter—they have it all. Toss in a cider and a few Imperials and no beer-lover should go away thirsty. Our house favorites: Velvet Underbrown and Prison Bound IPA.

What's for Dinner? A small, but very satisfying menu includes house-smoked meats and vegan alternatives (tofu or seitan) served as salads, nachos, wraps or sandwiches. Servings are plentiful.

Local Tip: for dessert, stroll a block east to the walk-up window at Sweet Ems Coffee and Ice Cream (6330 Clayton Ave) for excellent ice cream!

Second Shift Brewing 1601 Sublette Ave.

www.2ndshiftbrewing.com

Second Shift is located at the bottom of “The Hill” neighborhood just off Manchester Rd. It’s about a 20 minute walk from the heart of Dogtown, but be aware, it’s through more industrial areas with limited sidewalks.

The Beers: It’s worth the visit (or at least a visit to their website just to peruse their beer names!) Their core beers include Several IPAs (both coasts are represented), one each of a Wit, APA, Stout, Lager, Pilsner, Aged Saison, and a Double IPA. These are supplemented with a large rotating bevy of seasonals, specialties and “one-offs” far too numerous to list.

What's for Dinner? As the weather warms up, most weekends will find 2nd Shift hosting food trucks and/or pop-up restaurants from a variety of cuisines. Reservations are sometimes advised! Check the EVENTS section of their website.

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Modern Brewery 5231 Manchester Ave.

www.modernbrewery.com

Modern is also walkable, with the same caveat as Second Shift. Since it is currently pick-up only (check web site for current schedule), I recommend pre-planning and a car, so you can carry your treasured golden (or amber or brown) treasures home more easily! This, of course could change anytime, so please check their website for updates!

The Beers: A somewhat limited selection of Hazy IPAs, Imperial Stouts, Sours an APA, a Dark Lager.

What's for Dinner? Nothing being serve here! Stick around Dogtown for dinner!

"I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth, they can be depended upon to meet any national crisis. The great point is to bring them the real facts, and beer."
- Abraham Lincoln

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EASTWARD DESTINATIONS:

Urban Chestnut Brewing Company's Grove Bierhall 4465
Manchester Ave. www.urbanchestnut.com

Rumor has it that Urban Chestnut was the largest of the Phoenixes rising from the ashes of the displaced A-B executives, with an emphasis on the Marketing department. I don't doubt it, as the gift shop is among the best of the lot. The large per-friendly space with long community tables and a wall of windowed overhead doors give a German Bier Hall vibe that turns into a large covered patio on mild days.

The Beers: Various German style beers (Lagar, Wit, Dunkel, Pilsner, Weissbier) are rounded out by Pale Ales (IPAs from either coast, APA, Imperial IPA) and whatever might be seasonal.

What's for Dinner? The original somewhat heavy German kitchen has given way to a lighter, but satisfying fare of snacks, sandwiches and pizzas. Pretzels, Brats and Berliners (filled donuts) allow the faithful to keep in touch with their German roots.

Local Tip: Nearby attractions include Forest Park, The Science Center and the St. Louis Botanical Garden.

Civil Life Brewing 3714 Holt Ave.
www.thecivillife.com



Civil Life is a 10-15 minute drive southeast from Dogtown, and worth the trip! I confess, I am biased! I once lived much closer to Civil Life and it became my go-to brewery for a drink after work or a family special event. I had my retirement party there and I miss it terribly. As of this writing, the crew there is wrapping up an extensive 2-year remodeling project. Jake and his crew are building on a very welcoming, ambiance and I'm sure the new digs will continue to be super-inclusive and family friendly (including dogs!)

We got a sneak peek at the new facility. It features a super-sized patio with large umbrellas. There will be a full kitchen in the new facility, so there is no point to tell you about the wonderful soups, pretzels and salads they used to serve from the old, limited kitchen. I will update this listing as soon as I learn more.

The Beers: European-style beers (English, German, Seasonal Scottish and Irish). If you like dark beer with a good hop-malt balance anytime of the year, this is your place! Our house favorites: American Brown, Angel & Sword Pub Ale, Wee Heavy Scottish Ale)

What's for Dinner? TBD.

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4 Hands Brewery 1220 S. 8th Street. www.4handsbrewery.com

The Vibe: There are two floors of seating, with tappers on each floor (although not the same beers!) Several 4-top tables allow for cozy huddles with friends. Upstairs, long, bar-height community tables with stools allow you to meet new best friends at every visit. Ski ball and half-dozen '80s video games (including Tapper, of course!) invite you to revive your college skillset (or learn a new one). The wood slab tables and wooden “tractor seat” stools are rustic and beautiful.

The Beers: There's something for everyone on their year-round menu of beers and hard seltzers. Offerings include Pilsner, Brown, Lager, Several varieties of IPAs and other Pale Ales. Seasonal offerings, including fruit infusions, stouts and a Fest Biers as well as barrel-aged imperials are well-worth your attention. Our favorite: Peanut Butter Chocolate Milk Stout (Available October-March).

What's for Dinner? In stroke of marketing genius (and a stroke of luck for you!) the small food menu at 4 hands is provided by two of the best restaurants in the Soulard neighborhood—at very reasonable prices! Order on your device and pick it up at the downstairs window.

Local Tip: The beer menu on line has some great pairing suggestions for your take-home beers!

Rockwell Beer 1320 South Vandeventer Ave.

www.rockwellbeer.com

(Also, seasonal hours as a beer garden in Francis Park, 3.7 miles south of Dogtown)

The Vibe: Modern Industrial Chic --Brightly painted, stacked shipping containers are bordered by fire pits for outdoor seating. Inside—wide-open, tall ceilings cement floors, happy people.

The Beers: You may be tired of saying there is something for everyone, but it is true again. Helpfully categorized by flavor profile (light & crispy; hoppy; Funky, fruity & tart; malty). Beer lovers will be happy. Wines, hard seltzers and spirits are also available.

What's for Dinner? Like 4 Hands, Rockwell has partnered with a stellar local restaurant for its kitchen: brassWELL by Niche! A small and delicious menu of sharables, burgers, sandos, and salads will be sure to satisfy.



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Note: We haven't been in town to check out the Beer garden in Francis Park, but the family-friendly destination is definitely on our list for a future visit. According to their website, Niche also provides the kitchen, leveraging several local noshes.

Square One Brewery + Distillery 1727 Park Ave.

www.squareonebrewery.com

(Warning, don't try to drive directly down Park Ave. to get there from Dogtown!)

The Vibe: I've always thought of Square One as a restaurant that brews some very good beer.

The Beers: As far as I know, Square One does not can or bottle its beer, but there is a well-rounded, rotating tap list. For current offerings, consult their website!

What's for Dinner? For one thing, there's Brunch (Saturdays and Sundays) which features an amazing menu with about everything you might reasonably expect for brunch (and then some). I'll offer highlights, but it's *really* hard to narrow it down...Eggs Benedict, Shrimp and Grits, Crab Cakes, Chicken and Waffle, Homemade Hash and Eggs, Biscuits and Gravy, Omelets and more). Other days, choose from bar snacks, salads, sandwiches and entrees. Come hungry *and* thirsty!

Local Tip: Square One was a go-to spot for work special occasion lunches when I worked downtown. It never failed to please.

Beer is proof that God Loves us and wants us to be happy
- Benjamin Franklin

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Schlafly Tap Room 2100 Locust St. 63013 www.schlafly.com

No St. Louis craft beer tour would be complete without a trip to one of the Schlafly locations. This is the original on the edge of downtown. Schlafly is St. Louis's original Craft brewery. Opening in 1991, it was the first new brewpub since prohibition—and is largely responsible for my shift from my college beer tastes!

The Vibe: Bar, pool tables, and nighttime live music on the north side. (with a few tables for dining). Main restaurant to the north side with bar seating as well.

The Beers: Year-round beers like Kolsch, Hefeweizen, Pale Ale (flagship), Hazy IPA, and Oatmeal Stout (hello darkness my old friend!) are complimented by rotating seasonal favorites such as Coffee Stout, Oktoberfest, Pumpkin Ale, and Scotch Ale.

What's for Dinner? The two locations have different menu options, with some overlap. Menus are full dining menus—appetizers, salads, sandwiches, entrees and desserts. House favorites: Fish and fries at the Tap Room and HUGE, delicious portions of homemade Sticky Toffee Pudding at both locations. (Seriously, start with one for the table, even if you have a crowd!)

Local Tip: Events are held at both locations throughout the year. Check the web site to see if you are lucky enough to catch one! Our favorite at the tap room is Robert Burns held somewhere around the third week of January. In honor of the poet's birthday, the Scotch Ale is tapped and a good time is had by all. Haggis and Scotch Eggs are available and kilt-clad bagpipers and drummers entertain!

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WESTWARD DESTINATIONS:

Schlafly Bottleworks 7260 Southwest Ave. 63143

www.schlafly.com

This is the second of the Schlafly locations and the one closest to Dogtown. As the name suggests, it has a sizeable brewing and bottling operation adjacent to the bar and restaurant, including a large covered, heated patio.

The Beers: The beer selection is generally the same as the Tap room (with keg changeover timing accounting for any difference.)

What's for Dinner? The two locations have different menu options, with some overlap. Menus are full dining menus—appetizers, salads, sandwiches, entrees and desserts. Note the Sticky Toffee Pudding caveat above!

Local Tip: Events are held at both locations throughout the year. Check the web site to see if you are lucky enough to catch one! Our favorite at the Bottleworks location is the Alternative Art Fair presenting **local** area artisans and held in the parking lot near the second weekend of September in direct counterpoint to a juried nearby Art Fair with little local representation.

"In heaven there is no beer. That's why we drink it here!"
- Frankie Yankovic

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SIDE PROJECT BREWING at 7458 Manchester Rd.

And SIDE PROJECT CELLAR at 7373 Marietta Rd

www.sideprojectbrewing.com

Side Project brewery is devoted to barrel-aged beers and ales. It embraces experimentation, including wild ales and rustic Saisons. Visit the tasting room at the Brewery for a limited selection of beer. Visit the nearby Cellar for a full Belgium-inspired beer experience, including whiskey and wine. This is a different kind of beer experience. The menu is sorted by serving temperature.

The Beers: Due to the experimentation focus, it's hard to say what you might find. Batches tend to be small and there is not a standard tap list. You are guaranteed to find barrel aged styles (possibly some blended), Wild Ales, Sours, and often collaborations with local and distant partners.

What's for Dinner? There are several good restaurants within walking distance!

Roll out the barrel! We'll have a Barrel of fun!
- Jaromir Vejoda (Beer Barrel Polka)
