

Carbonated with care

Fresh Deli offers inventive craft soda



Leslie Klipsch

Eli Klipsch, age 9, tasted a variety of Fresh Deli's soda and declared Blueberry his favorite.

BY LESLIE KLIPSCH

Here in the Quad-Cities, we have locally roasted coffee, locally brewed beer, and even locally distilled vodka. It should be no surprise, then, that Quad-Citians can also claim another option within the haute beverage niche: boutique soda brewed in downtown Davenport at Fresh Deli by Nostalgia Farms.

Ed Kraklio and Joe Dennis, who opened Fresh Deli by Nostalgia Farms in February 2012, not only offer a variety of delicious locally grown and made-from-scratch food, but have developed a line of craft soda as well. After tasting a lemon-grass soda years ago, the two knew they wanted to cultivate their own line of bubbling refreshments to offer their customers. Mr. Dennis, a celebrated grower who many may recognize from the Freight House Farmers' Market, is also a home-brew mixologist of sorts. For years, Mr. Dennis has been developing formulas for artisanal sodas and has fine-tuned a variety of unique tastes that really pop.

Part of the allure of Fresh Deli's ever-evolving selection of soda is that — just like the deli's food — as many ingredients as possible are locally sourced and therefore the offerings are seasonal. Huckleberries, blueberries, strawberries, cherries and a variety of herbs — to name a few of the ingredients used to flavor the drinks — are grown at Nostalgia Farms just northwest of the Quad-Cities.

What cannot be grown on Iowa or Illinois soil is purchased at local stores like Greatest Grains, which is just up the hill from the deli.

Also appealing is the fact that the sodas are flavored naturally. While mainstream soda producers are criticized for using high-fructose corn syrup instead of cane sugar to sweeten drinks, Fresh Deli relies on their own recipes of flavor-infused simple syrups that allow the essence of the fresh fruits, herbs and spices to shine through.

The boutique sodas brewed at Fresh Deli remind me of the hipster-driven craft food movement happening in places like Brooklyn, New York, making the creative concept something of a welcomed novelty here in the Midwest. But while Mr. Kraklio and Mr. Dennis offer what some might consider a vanguard commodity, one can't help but notice the nostalgia involved as well.

Though younger patrons enjoy the treat of a special soda with their meal, Mr. Kraklio says it's the older crowd who loves the idea of a soda clerk creating a drink in front of them, conjuring memories of a local soda fountain and a time gone by. This is not lost on the proprietors of Fresh Deli by Nostalgia Farms. "In some ways the sodas are quite nostalgic," Mr. Kraklio says. "And, really, that's what we're all about."

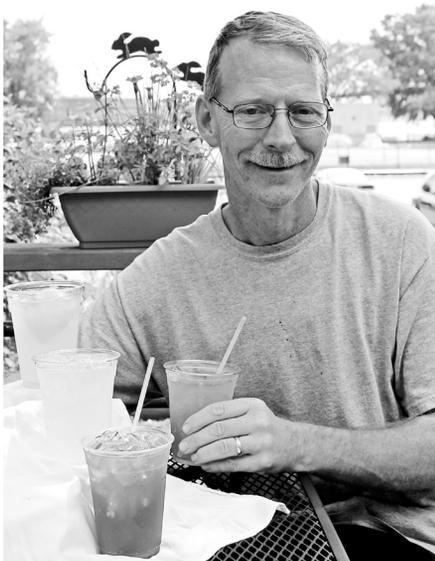
My favorite

Blueberry? Cherry-Vanilla? Ginger Ale? Though nearly impossible to decide, of the flavors that I've tasted at Fresh Deli, Pineapple Tarragon is the winner of my

strongest affection. For starters, it's not a flavor that I would ever expect to experience through a straw and I welcome the new taste sensation. Take a sip and you can't help but notice as the soft carbonation and subtly sweet pineapple pleases the tongue, followed by an undertone of the tarragon's black licorice flavor. The icy and inventive soda is smooth and refreshing, perfect for enjoying on a hot, late-summer day.

Nostalgia's favorite

Mr. Kraklio won't hesitate to tell you about his love of the Huckleberry soda fashioned by Fresh Deli. "It's a beautiful, bright purple drink," he muses. "The rich flavor of the huckleberry comes through and the color is just fantastic. It reminds me of the jams I had as a child." A huckleberry is a small,



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Ed Kraklio.

round, edible berry similar to a blueberry, though not as sweet. The soda has notes of nutmeg and cinnamon that give it a rich, complex flavor. As one may assume, the huckleberries used in the soda are grown and harvested on Nostalgia Farm.

Why you should visit

Not only are the craft sodas notable, the food at Fresh Deli is exceptionally fresh and delicious. You'll find rich vegetarian and vegan options (imagine a hearty beet slider smoked over cherry wood and served on soft home-made bun) as well as burgers, bacon, bison and more — all locally and sustainably produced. Take your food and drink and sit outside on the pleasant patio/veritable herb garden and treat yourself to a lovely view of LeClaire Park, the Centennial Bridge and the Mississippi River.

When you should visit

Enjoy the ever-changing variety of craft sodas (as well as the creative menu featuring locally sourced fare) at Fresh Deli by Nostalgia Farms located downtown Davenport at the Davenport Freight House, 421 W. River Drive. Hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday and Monday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Visit nostalgiafarms.com or follow Fresh Deli Nostalgia Farms on Facebook for more information.

Each month in The Gold Standard, Leslie Klipsch, a freelance writer and editor based in Davenport, shines a spotlight on the gems of the Quad-Cities area — for Gold Book readers. She enjoys reading, cooking, spending time with her husband and three young children and exploring all that the Quad-Cities has to offer.



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