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Seasonal brews impact water consumption

September 18, 2015 | By Naima Montacer



For some, the feel of fall comes in the sip of a pumpkin spice latte, and for others the cooler weather brings the anticipation of another beverage, fall beer. Although I reside on the latte side of that spectrum, I'm not blind to our community's love of beer. In the last few years breweries have popped up in neighborhoods and city center, showcasing their unique hop brewing abilities. The local beer market has exploded, pushing me to take a closer look at the connection of beer and the environment.

The largest impact beer has on the environment is the water used in the brewing process. On average in the U.S., it takes seven barrels of water to produce one barrel of beer. And 70 percent of the water used in the process (consider cleaning, heating, etc), is discharged as waste. But many breweries have noticed this waste and have invested in systems to recirculate wasted water into other aspects of the brewing process.

The brewing process also requires a substantial amount of electricity, yet can be offset with modifications and utilizing renewable resources. Many breweries around the county are focusing on sustainability efforts. New Belgium Brewing Company in Colorado, utilizes solar energy, purchases wind credits from their utility company, and is capturing methane from their brewing process and using it to generation electricity. Franconia Brewery in local McKinney, Texas operates in an energy efficient building and uses Green Mountain Energy, known for offering the choice of



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What is the environmental impact of this frothy Deep Ellum Blonde beer waiting to be devoured at Hopdoddy Burger Bar on McKinney Avenue? / Photo by Naima Montacer

Breweries are also looking at the whole systems approach and trying to minimize the carbon footprint of brewing your frosty

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beverage. The Alaskan Brewing Company was the first U.S. brewery to install a carbon reclamation system, which captures carbon dioxide released during the brewing process and uses it to package the beer and purge oxygen from holding tanks. Reusing carbon dioxide on site, reduces the amount of the greenhouse gas released into the atmosphere and eliminates the need to purchase and ship carbon dioxide to the plant. Many breweries are also selling or giving away their used grains to nearby farms to be used as livestock feed.

Transporting beer is environmentally costly, which is why local beer is always best to purchase. Choose a tap beer when dining out to reduce waste since glasses and kegs can be reused. Local canned beer is your next choice because aluminum is lighter to ship and easier to recycle than glass.

While you're at a local restaurant, make sure to encourage them to recycle. Only a handful of restaurants in Dallas are making this commitment to the environment. Hopdoddy Burger Bar, on McKinney Avenue, is placing the environment at top priority by recycling, composting food waste, and of course, serving up great local beers to pair with their juicy burgers. Hopdoddy, named after the union of burgers and beer, serves up several of the local drafts and also sources as much meat, produce and dairy from local ranchers and farmers. To find out where their meat is from, just check their wall — a list of mostly local suppliers proudly decorates one of their walls.

Even if you aren't a huge beer drinker, the local breweries are also serving our community in other sustainable ways. Earth Day Texas (earthdaytx.org) is kicking off a new initiative to extend the environmental talk year round. In collaboration with The Westwood School, the new Earth Day Monthlies (EDMo) will take place the third Thursday of every month at a local brewery. As Earth Day Texas puts it, "The way we see it, reducing your carbon footprint by supporting local breweries is a great place to start implementing save-the-planet practices!" The first EDMo will highlight how local food is a source for social good in Dallas County, held on Sept. 17 at Craft and Growler, followed by Oct. 15 at the Deep Ellum Brewing Company.

Whether you drink beer or not, supporting our local breweries and businesses that sell local beer, and encouraging these same businesses to be more sustainable is good for our community.

Naima Montacer is a freelance writer and conservationist. View more at her website EnviroAdventures.com.

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