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Photograph courtesy of Bill Russ, visitnc.com

The Great Beer Bonanza

The third annual North Carolina Beer Month gives even small breweries, like ones in Sylva, a chance to make a big splash

WRITTEN BY JACK IGELMAN

Jackson County is a long way from Europe, but German-born brewmeister Dieter Kuhn of [Heinzelmännchen Brewery](#) in Sylva is offering a pint-size taste of his homeland during [North Carolina Beer Month](#) this April. Kuhn is hoping his tasty Old World-style altbiers will give people another reason to visit the Jackson County seat.

“In Germany each town is recognized for their beer—people went to different places because the beer was famous,” says Kuhn, who started as a homebrewer and eventually decided to open the brewpub with his wife, Sheryl Rudd, in 2004. Their award-winning beer is styled after the smooth, easy drinking, nonbitter



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beer of Germany's Black Forest region.

Margo Knight Metzger, executive director of the Raleigh-based North Carolina Craft Brewers Guild, says that the statewide celebration of malt beverages is intended to shine a light on the Tar Heel state's flourishing beer trade—which, according to Metzger, amounts to nearly \$800 million annually.

While there's plenty already to draw people to the region, the third annual beer month is designed to inspire dozens of sud-related festivals, tastings, and events to promote the state's brew houses from Wilmington to West Jefferson and quench the thirst of beer loving road-trippers.

Metzger is hoping that visitors will indulge in the attraction of the larger craft brewers and also raise a toast to the state's small, community-oriented crafters, which will help towns tap into the growing number of craft beer tourists. She says that many local beer makers, such as Heinzelmännchen, lack the resources to tout their tasty concoctions to a wider audience.

"Sylva is a town with a lot of charm, but it's got a great little beer scene too," Metzger says. "We feel like N.C. Beer Month helps some of the smaller communities the most. Small brewers add to the quality of life and give people another reason to visit towns like Sylva."

To celebrate North Carolina Beer Month in Sylva, Heinzelmännchen and Innovation Brewing, both headquartered on Main Street, are joining forces: They'll brew a batch of blackberry wheat beer to demonstrate the kind of tasty ales available in the confines of a friendly, small-town setting.

"We want to get people to look outside the box and highlight the beer in Jackson County," says Kuhn. "That's what makes craft brewing interesting—there's no limit to the type of libations you can create."

On Tap

More than 900 breweries across the state are participating in N.C. Beer Month. Visit ncbeermonth.com for events and tips on



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planning a beer-themed excursion.

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—[Carolina Mountain Cheese Fest](#) on April 26 and [Asheville Artisan Bread Baker's Festival](#), May 2 & 3.

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