

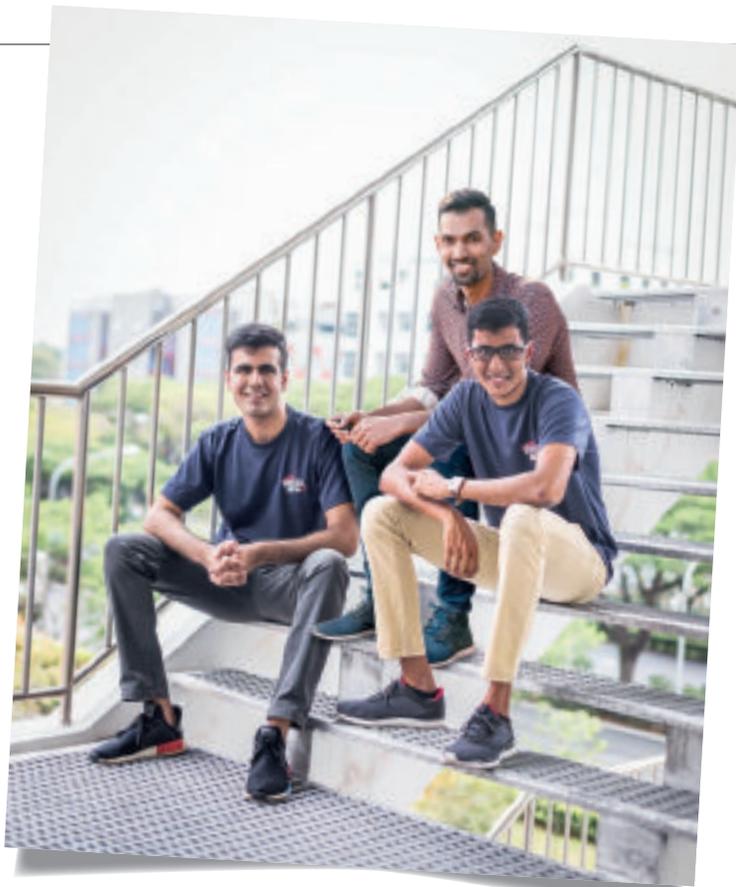
Singapore

Too cool for school

After an aborted home-brewing venture in university, three friends bounce back with a craft beer brand offering lagers, pale ales and altbiers

BEER Rahul Immandira, Heetesh Alwani and Abilash Subbaraman used to bond over their shared passion for craft beer by making home-brews in their school's residential hall. They named the stuff Binjai Brew, after Nanyang Technological University's Binjai Hall. However, after brewing about 400 bottles, the three friends were asked to stop operations as they were, unknowingly, violating Singaporean laws.

After leaving school, it didn't take long for the trio to turn Binjai Brew into a real business venture. In order to reduce costs, they now work with a contract brewer that produces and cans their beers. "There is now less emphasis on the brewing process since we contract that out," says Immandira (pictured, top right), who first got into craft beer while interning at the Benoit-Casper Brewing Company in California in 2017. "Abilash (pictured, far right) is currently in charge of recipe development and test brews, and Heetesh (pictured, right) visits bars to sell beer and keeps in contact with our current business customers."



Singapore has a thriving microbrewery scene – ranging from established names with straightforward beers, like Archipelago Brewery, to newer brewers such as Brewlander, who aren't afraid to experiment with unusual styles and local flavors. Binjai Brew sits somewhere in the middle, with their take on the India pale lager, French saison and German altbier.

"We went for styles that have a history to them so we could weave that into the narrative of our beer," says Immandira. "The Error 404 India pale lager was our interpretation of the bitter, traditional India pale ale, which resulted in a light, aromatic and complex brew. The Alt-O altbier is a historical style of beer originating from the Dusseldorf region of Germany. It has a clean and crisp taste that is made by top fermentation, an older method than the more common bottom fermentation. Both of these styles are rarely found in Singapore. The Sol Mate – a French saison – is a low-alcohol brew with a history that traces back to the Middle Ages. With a light and dry finish, it's a slightly more common style in Singapore, but still unique."

What's next for the Binjai Brew crew? Their own venue – and more flavors. "It has always been a dream to have a place to call our own," says Immandira. "Going forward, we would definitely try to include a few more experimental beers in the lineup just to exercise our creative side." Fruity sour beers, anyone? binjaibrew.com

– Kurt Ganapathy

BEER WATCH



Fans of India pale ales, take note: Singapore craft beer label Lion Brewery Co has launched the Straits Pale Ale, a crisp, flavorful and well-bodied take on the classic brew. Named after a historical 19th-century London brewery, the brand – established in late 2018 by Britons Harry Renshaw and Ben Hendry-Prior – focuses on producing fresh and refreshing beers that complement the tropical climate of Southeast Asia. Stay tuned for more flavors as they are currently developing a dry-hopped lager, featuring a light and delicate profile with a floral finish. lionbreweryco.com

IMAGES: LAURYN ISHAK & ALEX INGRAM (TOO COOL FOR SCHOOL)

