

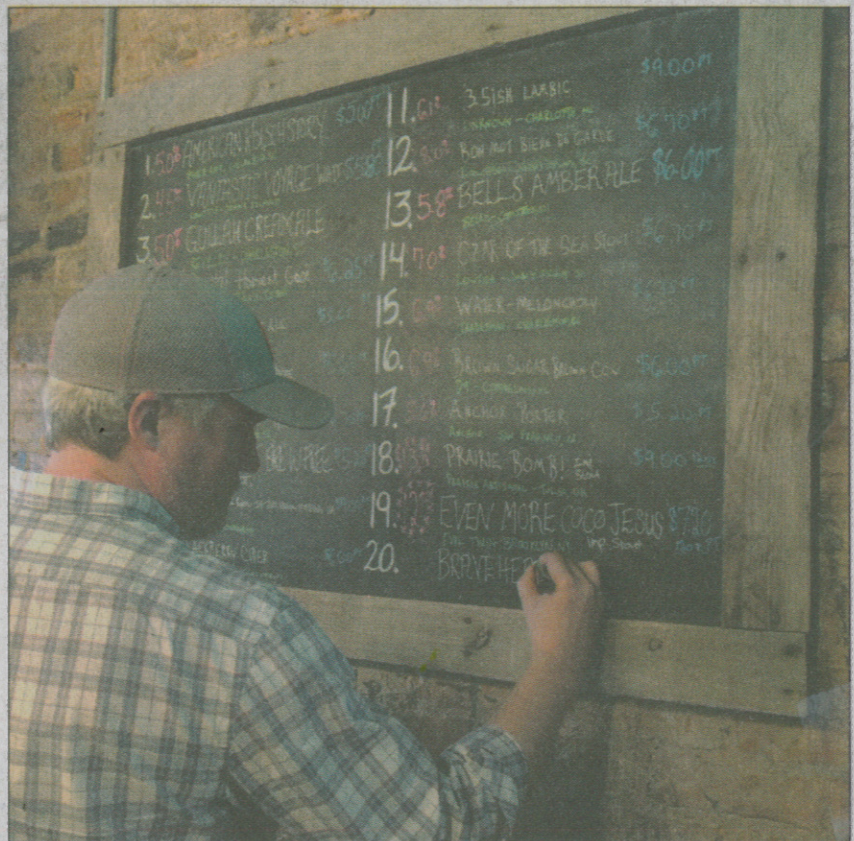
Seven SC breweries, more than 20 brews on tap for Labor Day event

BY STEPHANIE JADRNICEK
THE JOURNAL

SENECA —

Ryan Coker's career path completely changed after visiting a friend's garage. Born and raised in Seneca, Coker attended Northside Elementary, Ravenel Elementary, Seneca Middle and graduated from Seneca High School before heading off to College of Charleston 16 years ago. He'd planned on working in the health care field and "blames" his wife for his abrupt turn toward brewing. Before the two were wed, Coker's wife introduced him to a few of her friends — a couple named Trevor and Joanna. And the first time Coker went to the couple's home, Trevor was in his garage with a few friends brewing beer.

"I was mind-blown about the thought of making better beer than I was currently buying, for pennies on the dollar. So I asked



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Brews on the Alley manager Matt Jordan adds another keg to the lineup. Several of the beers planned for tastings at the upcoming Brew & 'Que in Seneca flow from the taps at Brews.



SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

Seneca native Ryan Coker will bring a little taste of Charleston back home at Brew & 'Que, planned for Sept. 3 at Gignilliat Field.

a ton of questions that day, and I think Trevor sensed a comrade in his brewing endeavors and I was asked back for the next brew session," Coker said. "The rest was history. If it weren't for a haphazard encounter and for Trevor showing me the ropes, I wouldn't have taken this path — thankfully, the universe tends to unfold as it should."

Along with two business partners, Sean Fleming and Jay Daratony, Coker opened Revelry Brewing in downtown Charleston about three years ago. He thinks what endears customers to Revelry is the brewing team's willingness to brew virtually any

style of beer with award-winning execution and the bar staff's ability to remain welcoming and entertaining while providing beer knowledge without pretension.

"Some crowd favorites at the brewery are the Funkmaster IPA, Gullah Cream Ale and Up Sh*m Creek, but we keep around 10-15 different beers on tap at all times, so there's something for everyone," he said.

Revelry is one of seven South Carolina breweries that will set up shop at Labor Day Brew & 'Que on Sept. 3, from 5-9 p.m., at Gignilliat Field in Seneca. The barbecue

SEE BREWS, PAGE B8

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FROM PAGE B1

cook-off and craft beer tasting will also feature live music by Conservation Theory and Hot as a Pepper, as well as a kids' area and a silent auction benefiting Our Daily Rest and the Golden Corner Food Pantry.

With his fingers on the tap of the craft brew scene, Brews on the Alley manager Matt Jordan is the brewery coordinator for the event. He said Revelry isn't the only Charleston-based brewery with roots in Seneca.

"Frothy Beard also has owners who are from Seneca. I think it's neat that two homegrown breweries are coming home for the festival," Jordan said. "Both Frothy Beard and Revelry specialize in typical craft beers such as IPAs and porters, and we feature a good portion of their beers here on tap at Brews."

Freehouse Brewery is also based in Charleston. Jordan said Freehouse brews sours, IPAs and a standard line of lagers and browns, but what sets the brewery apart from others is that it's a certified organic brewery.

Jordan's goal for the festival is to feature a diverse selection of beers, including many approachable styles for newcomers to craft beer, as well as something new for the seasoned connoisseurs.

"We'll feature a lot of IPAs, because it's the No. 1 requested style in craft beer, and probably one or two more unique styles — perhaps a sour from one brewery and an imperial stout from another — just to provide a range of different styles so people can taste something they may not have tried before," he said.

Based in Anderson, Carolina Bauernhaus produces some of the more unparalleled beers that will be available at the festival, according to Jordan. The majority of its brews are made from ingredients sourced within the state.

"The owners and the head brewer at

Carolina Bauernhaus actively seek yeast and other ingredients from South Carolina. So where a Belgian-style beer may feature yeast from Belgium or a German beer may feature yeasts typically found in Germany, Carolina Bauernhaus is producing beers that will be known for being made from our state, since those ingredients are sourced here," Jordan said. "They have flavor profiles that are specific to South Carolina, which I think is really cool."

The festival will also feature River Rat Brewery from Columbia, 13 Stripes from Greenville and Low Tide Brewery from John's Island. Jordan said Low Tide Brewery produces approachable beers that will be more in line with domestic beers people may feel more familiar with.

And although the breweries could be seen as competitors, Coker said what he enjoys most about the craft brewing scene is the camaraderie.

"No other industry that I've been exposed to has such supporting individuals and a collective mindset toward quality and creativity," he said. "Brewing beer is hard work — mostly cleaning, in fact. But there's something really special about creating a product with your hands, from raw ingredients, and having it come together in a symphony of flavor and enjoyed by others."

Tickets for Brew & Que cost \$25 prior to the event and \$50 at the door. For those only interested in sampling barbecue without tasting any beer, tickets are \$15 ahead of time and \$30 at the door. Children under 12 may attend free of charge.

For tickets, visit upstatetoday.com, text OCONEE to 71441 or drop by The Journal office at 210 W. North 1st St. in Seneca. For more information, call (864) 882-2375.