

Microbrewery near airport gets Redlands' nod

11:28 PM PDT on Thursday, May 24, 2007

By NAOMI KRESGE
The Press-Enterprise

Beer will replace Bibles at part of the former Mission Aviation Fellowship headquarters near Redlands Municipal Airport.

Hangar 24 Craft Brewery got city approval this week to brew and hold beer tastings in a 4,640-square-foot Sessums Drive warehouse vacated last year by the missionary group, which moved its headquarters to Idaho.

The brewery will be the first microbrewery in Redlands and one of only a few in the Inland area, owner and master brewer Ben Cook said.



Cook's landlord, Redlands Aviation manager Jim Ott, told the city's Planning Commission on Tuesday that airport landowners like the idea of attracting more visitors to the airport.

Eventually, he said, his company hopes to see a restaurant open in the area as well.

"People are going to be looking to come to it like they would to a winery out in Temecula," Planning Commissioner Paul Foster said of the brewery.

The craft brewery is named for a Redlands airport hangar where pilots and their friends host a weekly gathering in the summer, said Cook, 26, a pilot who keeps a vintage 1940s Commonwealth Skyraider at the airport.

Unlike a brew pub, which sells food and most of its beer on site, Cook and his wife, Jessica, 23, said the vast majority of Hangar 24's business would be selling to local bars, restaurants and grocery stores. Their city permit prohibits them from providing chairs in the tasting area.

Patrons will be able to tour the brewery and get a six-pack or keg to go.

"The tasting room is going to be the whole brewery," said Ben Cook, a graduate of the master brewer program at UC Davis. "People just love standing next to the tanks and taking pictures."

Story continues below



Ben Cook and his wife, Jessica, hope their brewery will be a bubbling success. They plan to brew their first beer in July, starting with basics such as pale ale, German pilsner and India pale ale, then brewing unique and even experimental offerings.

They hope to brew their first beer in July and to produce about 800 barrels in their first year, brewing once every two weeks. A barrel holds 31 gallons of beer, the equivalent of two regular-sized kegs.

They plan to start out with basic beers, including pale ale, German pilsner and India pale ale. Eventually they hope to offer unique styles, including beers that can be aged like wine and experimental single-run beers sold at first only at the brewery.

They could brew up to 3,500 barrels a year with their current equipment, and the Sessums Drive building has enough space to brew more than twice that much.

That would be a big step from the couple's first brewing attempts five years ago when Ben Cook was a biology student at Cal State San Bernardino. Home brewing was initially Jessica Cook's idea, and they served friends out of a jerry-rigged keg refrigerator--or "kegerator."

As the Cooks honeymooned around the beer-producing countries of Europe -- Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Ireland -- last summer, the missionaries who used the Sessums building for shipping and receiving were moving out.

The Cooks took possession in February and have done most of their own renovations, stripping and repainting the old warehouse's peeling walls and ceiling.

The stainless steel and copper brewing equipment comes from the Monte Carlo Resort & Casino in Las Vegas.

"Eventually we could have a really nice beer garden and restaurant," Jessica Cook said. "But we want to be known for the beer."

Reach Naomi Kresge at 909-806-3060 or nkresge@PE.com