

BOTTOMSup

KILKENNY'S CASK CONDITIONED ALE

The memorial tribute for Michael "Beer Hunter" Jackson at Shorts Brewery in Bellaire brought out all sorts of beer enthusiasts, including Ray Wise and Matthew Blakely of North Peak/Kilkenny's who came with a contingent from Traverse City. Wise is the new assistant brewmaster at North Peak Brewing Company and Kilkenny's Irish Public House, and Blakely is an enthusiastic bartender at Kilkenny's - he's passionate about the brews and the people he serves them to.

Kilkenny's opened a few months ago below North Peak, and is quickly becoming a favorite hangout for the after work crowd. They open at 4 pm and the darkened environment creates an authentic Irish pub feel. The menu differs from their sister pub upstairs, with a strong focus on Irish cuisine, so be sure to check out the corned beef sandwich and the bangers & mash (beer steamed sausage, char-grilled and served over gouda cheese mashed potatoes). No Irish pub is complete without beer, of course - and Wise and Blakely invited me to check out their offerings. I have always been a fan of the cask-conditioned ales at North Peak and was pleased to learn that Kilkenny's was continuing the tradition.

Currently on the cask tap is the Oak Conditioned Bourbon Stout. Cask conditioned beers are allowed to mature naturally, with live yeast left in to continue to condition the beer in the cask. The result is a natural carbonation and a more intense flavor profile. According to Wise, they serve their cask ales around 55 degrees, versus the standard 34 degrees for beers on tap (ice cold beer masks several flavor profiles). The Bourbon Stout is fantastic. Wise and head brewmaster Kim Schneider have created a perfect synergy between the malt and bourbon flavors. I was surprised to learn that only one shot of bourbon was used in the oak chips to produce the 20-gallon cask because the bourbon flavors come through quite well. Be sure to get in and order a pint before it's gone (both Kilkenny's and North Peak change their cask ales often). Another brew that was quite pleasing is their Marble City Red, the same red ale they serve upstairs; but this a nitrogenated version that creates a creamy texture to the ale. For a complete listing of beers and their menu, go to www.kilkennyspub.com, or better yet, just stop in. --Rick Coates

