

Here's to the first 10 years of Warsaw Beer Festival

Christmas for the Polish craft beer community comes rather early this year, as spring 2024 will be the season to be jolly. One of the biggest craft beer festivals in Central and Eastern Europe celebrates its 10th birthday this March – a major milestone in the history of this thriving industry. And it's not just the festival that is to celebrate a 10-year jubilee... Several Polish craft breweries are too, which makes this occasion so much more special. And there's still more: Warsaw Beer Festival over the years has grown to become a triad of events spanning from “craftbeership” to craftsmanship.

In a nutshell

Warsaw Beer Festival dates all the way back to 2014, it always takes place in Warsaw (as the name suggests), and it started as an event focused on new wave, new school, novelty beers brewed by passionate homebrewers who were crazy enough to set up companies and go pro. Hardcore festivalgoers who remember the first edition – the insane pilot of what was to be – will tell you how it took place in Warsaw's business district (affectionately called Mordor) in a post-industrial setting. Or how the branding and the stands of individual breweries were anything but professional, like from another reality altogether. Since then, it moved downtown, to the state-of-the-art business centre at Warsaw's Legia Stadium.

10 years and 16 editions later (we lost three to the pandemic), our wildest dreams have been outmatched, outdistanced and outstripped by the brewers' ingenuity, professionalism and eye to detail – from recipes to labels, from stands to merchandise, from unique beers to unique sub-events organised on the festival's main stage. If we said we weren't proud of them, we'd be lying. And we're honoured we had the pleasure to watch them grow and mature. Some of the biggest brands on the Polish market have been with us from day one helping us shape the industry's landscape and discovering global, regional and domestic trends. Others are not with us anymore, but they have a well-deserved place in the festival's history. There are also those who rejoined our ranks after a more or less short hiatus – in their case, we see best how dynamically the craft scene is evolving.

“In 2014, we were all amateurs and hobbyists. It took years of trial and error to perfect the formula of what we wanted the festival to be. But a decade later, we

are a household name, and we cooperate with breweries and festivals both in Poland and abroad. And because this year is so special, 10 breweries from Poland and Lithuania will present special beers to toast our first jubilee with. Everyone is in for a big surprise and we can't wait to open the gates on Thursday 21st March" brags **Paweł Leszczyński**, Warsaw Beer Festival CEO.

A half-pint and a snack

From the very beginning, we knew that exceptional beer yearns for remarkably delicious food. What started as a couple of food stands transformed into a festival in its own right. Some of the most recognisable and well-known food trucks with a whole massive range of cuisines come twice a year to make sure festival guests do not drink on an empty stomach. Anyway, that would be a crime not to sample any of the dishes served which are first-rate and super diverse.

"Warsaw Beer Festival has never been just about beer. There are also countless other attractions for people of all ages, including a dozen amazing food trucks worthy of a Michelin star. Being a part of the festival food scene from the start, I can testify to its phenomenal development. No matter if it's meat or something vegan you're looking for, there is such an impressive cross-section of various cuisines available that even the most demanding palate will be satisfied. And we adjusted to times – just like breweries, we prepare something special for each edition as well. For many of us, this is the best party of the year!" tells us **Kamil Domurad**, founder of Chyży Wół (The Nimble Ox).

To spice things up (pun intended), from this year on, it is no longer "a food truck zone", but a proper street food festival accompanying Warsaw Beer Festival. It shall be known as Gastrofaza which is a silly Polish word to describe 'the munchies'. So now if you feel like you got the munchies while feasting on some of the most wicked beers on the market, you know what to do: get yourself a plate of delightful delish!

Craft comes in handy, or... handicraft

A triad (or trinity if you're a Matrix fan) is "a set of three" according to the Oxford Dictionary. This is precisely the case of Warsaw Beer Festival. We spent the last three years looking for artisans who were not afraid to experiment with tradition. That's how Strefa Targów Rzemiosła was born, our very own Craft Fair with a cornucopia of wonders at your fingertips: caseiculture (that's a sophisticated

word for cheesemaking), extremely hot sauces, graphic novels, chocolatiers and pastry chefs, an apiary, felt toys, tailors, specialty ice cream, coffee to wake up for, freeze-dried fruit, a tattoo artist to name but a few.

“There is nothing better than being able to discuss the characteristics of an extraordinary beer with the people who came up with the recipe and were part of the entire process all the way to bottling or canning. Same goes for our Craft Fair – the artisans will be more than happy to explain their craft and the methods they use. Some will even invite you to their stand, give you the tools and make you have a go at what they do. If you thought embossing leather was easy-peasy, you might want to think again” laughs **Izabela Smolińska**, Head of Craft at Warsaw Beer Festival.

Warsaw Beer Festival is a family event for people who drink beer, those who don't, those who are only beginning to discover its diversity. What all those people have in common is that they stay longer at the festival than it takes to down a pint. And what better way to spend your day with family or friends than raise a cup, grab a bite, and go hunting for handicraft? Cherry on top: look for a special jubilee hot sauce we made with one of the artisans using smoked malt extract.

Say no to boredom

Festivals are all about fun. Their definition is quite self-explanatory: “an event celebrated by a community and focusing on some characteristic aspect or aspects of that community”. Definitions are boring though, so allow us to shed some more light on Warsaw Beer Festival in our own words.

The lush triad of events – Warsaw Beer Festival, Munchies, and Craft Fair – combines the best of what each pillar has to offer: exquisite craft beer, cider and mead; enticing delectable food; and true handicraft. However, why should we put a cap on fun? Arcade and board games, outdoor sports, lectures and master classes, even a sauna with essential oils and a licenced Aufgussmeister – pick and mix, take your pick.

Why should you come to Warsaw?

The Polish capital is a proud city with an incredible history and its own traditions. Back in the day, Warsaw even had its own dialect which alas can nowadays only be found in literature and music. Twice a year – in spring and in autumn – there's

a massive craft beer festival taking place on the grounds of the Legia football stadium. Getting to Warsaw by plane, car or train is a no brainer, and there are plenty of hotels and other types of accommodation to choose from. There's the Chopin Museum, Warsaw Rising Museum, Copernicus Science Centre, several large parks where you can go jogging or enjoy a picnic, the boulevards along the Vistula River...

The question you should be asking yourself is: "Why wouldn't you come to Warsaw?"

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March 21-23, Legia Warsaw Stadium (Łazienkowska 3)

Tickets: <https://eventim.pl>

Details and program of the event:

<https://warsawbeerfestival.com>

Disc with materials and photos:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1baG8LK-WckqHs9GIO98daAb8xie7mPWz>

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