

DEBATE SECTION

Welcome to the debate section of the Scandinavian Brewers' Review – we strongly encourage you to participate with your comments on the contents, or with any other point of view you might have on matters related to the beer and brewing scene in the Nordic countries and beyond. Kindly submit your comments to the technical editor on anders@kissmeyer.dk

The Nordic Brewing Cooperation in Practice

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Inspired by the recent Craft Brewers Conference in San Francisco and previous Scandinavian Brewers Conferences, our technical editor has been dreaming of a Nordic brewing cooperation on a whole different level to the benefit of all.



The magazine you are currently reading is an example of the way we try to cooperate in practice amongst Nordic and Baltic brewers and breweries. The Scandinavian School of Brewing is – something I feel that we often tend to forget – one of the oldest surviving examples of a practical and successful Nordic cooperation through a shared institution. When seen in the light of the severe conditions – extreme consolidation and a steep decrease in the number of brewing professionals with a brewing specific educational background – it is both impressive and encouraging that the school is still going strong. A fact that cannot help to inspire other ambitious dreams...

We organise Scandinavian Brewing Technology Meetings (Skandinavisk Bryggeritekisk Møde) frequently, and for the past five years, mainly the small breweries in Scandinavia have

gathered annually for the Scandinavian Brewers Conference, too. (This year's conference was, unfortunately, cancelled very shortly before it was supposed to have taken place in mid-June. But I have learned from reliable sources that it will take place next year.)

So, no one can say that we are not in active contact with each other regularly. But are we utilising the true potential of our brewing community? Do we take full advantage of the fact that there are so many things in our overall cultures and in our brewing scenes, industries and traditions that tie us together much more than the differences separate us? Just for a second, think of your fellow Nordic colleagues and their breweries, and then consider the way you see them as compared to your no doubt numerous other friends and colleagues in Russia, Germany, the UK and the USA for instance. Do you see what I am getting at?

I always seem to look at everything related to craft brewing in Scandinavia in the light of what is happening in the USA. Not only because of my well-known deep admiration for and love of the US craft brewing scene, but just as much because it is a constant reminder to me of what we could do here if we

choose to. And, surely, as relates the topic of this column, there are quite a few things where we could find useful inspiration in the cooperation between the North American brewers – in particular, in the way it is expressed in the Brewers Association. Hopefully, the advantages of a much tighter and much more ambitious cooperation should be evident to all, but, if not, let me just mention a few: With a stronger cooperation, we would strengthen the uniqueness of the Nordic brewing culture, we would be able to support each other technically, we would achieve a common forum for marketing the Nordic aspect of our activities which would strengthen all Nordic breweries, not just at home, but, especially, on the export markets, a mutual Nordic brewing platform would create immense and to a large extend free PR opportunities for all, more united we would stand much stronger in our shared battle against the many political attacks on our products and livelihood. Not to mention all the fun and the sensation of belonging to a well-defined, strong and unique brewing culture. And I could go on...

How can all of this – or at least some of it to begin with – be achieved? None of us have the time, and we do not currently have the funds (but I wonder whether such activities could not receive a significant funding from the Nordic Council?) to pay our way out of it, thus, I have in my list of ideas, below, focused on those that can be realised through a minimal effort from a lot of ourselves and those that could be arranged commercially by a ‘third party company’:

- Establish ‘**The Nordic Beer Cup**’ – a high-level professional beer competition open to all beers brewed in the Nordic and Baltic countries. Financed through sponsorships and the admittance fees on beers entered.
- Establish ‘**The Great Nordic Beer Festival**’ – maybe just every two or four years, travelling between the capitals of our

countries, and highlighting to the public, the media and our customers the great and unique beer universe we share. Can be run on a commercial basis by an event company.

- Establish a ‘**Nordic Beer and Brewing Website**’ – facilitating communication internally and to all other stakeholders. The website can be run commercially and financed through banner commercials.
- Combine and strengthen **The Nordic Brewing Technology Meeting** and the **Scandinavian Brewers Conference** into a yearly event comparable to the Craft Brewers Conferences in the U.S. An undertaking that should be manageable by combined efforts of the Nordic Brewers’ Guilds and volunteers from the breweries that do not have any members in these.
- Further revitalise **the Scandinavian Brewers’ Review** by an increased active participation by the readers... I’m ready if you are!

And once we have accomplished all this, why don’t we move on and establish new and not yet thought of ways to cooperate and help each other, cultivating the foundation for our great industry and our tasty products? Our own raw materials, our own beer styles – the sky’s the limit!

