



FOR ALL ITS GRANDIOSITY, VICTORY'S NEW GASTROPUB WILL DISTINGUISH ITSELF WITH ITS MICRO-LEVEL BREWING.

# The Next Craft Beer Hotbed

There's a gold rush in Kennett Square, which'll be home to four gastropubs by the fall, including two opening behind local brewers in the next few months. **By Mike Madaio**

Nestled at the heart of Chester County farmland, humble Kennett Square's become ground zero in recent years for some of the most sophisticated cooking in and around Philadelphia—Talula's Table, Sovana Bistro and the late, great Orchard, most notably.

The scene is poised to evolve further still over the next few months with gastropub openings by a pair of local craft brewers, one a household name, the other, just born.

Victory at Magnolia, a 250-seat restaurant that'll occupy the 8,000-plus-square foot ground floor of Magnolia Place, a four-story, luxury apartment building, will be the Downingtown-based Victory Brewing Company's second.

"There's been such a growth of population in Chester County," says Matt Krueger, the vice president of Victory's retail operations. "We've been considering expansion for a while now, but this opportunity is unique in that it gives us the chance to be a part of a great community so close to our original location. Combined with the opening of our new Parkesburg brewery, now is a better time than ever."

The 140,000-square foot brewery, set on 42 acres of Chester County countryside, opened in March. It's tricked out with a top-shelf, German-built ROLEC brewhouse and a slew of other state-of-the-art tools that will produce 225,000 barrels of beer a year, more than double the capability of the original brewery.

That means wiggle room for micro-level experimentation. New, site-specific beer will be stored at Victory at Magnolia in a five-barrel bre-

whouse. And that'll be on top of the standing and seasonal stock by the 26th-largest craft brewer in the country. "Having the opportunity to brew on a smaller system will allow for real-time customer feedback, and might even give rise to a new style for the masses," Krueger says.

The Victory gastropub was forecast to open in spring, but the winter wreaked havoc on the construction schedule, delaying the start until early fall.

In the immediate future, the Kennett Brewing Company Taproom is expected to open on Broad Street sometime this spring, though when, exactly, remains unsure.

The beer will be brewed entirely on site and will range from staunchly-loyal replications of and inspired riffs on English ales to hoppy, west coast-style IPAs, a mix tape, if you will, scrupulously curated by brewers harboring a lifelong crush.

"Everyone from those new to craft beer to the real hopheads out there [will] have something to get excited about," says Chris Braunstein, a co-founder of Kennett Brewing Company.

Put in the context of the recent opening of Two Stones Pub at the Shoppes at Longwood, the third location for the Delaware-based, craft-minded chain, and the long tenure of Half Moon Restaurant & Saloon, whose beer inventory reads like a drunken, OCD world traveler's diary, Kennett Square's taps will soon run as bottomless and pure as most major cities'. Quality begets quality, something the chefs and restaurateurs have been wise to for a while now.