

By: [Patti Smith](#)

Love Letter to a Brewpub

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Happy Valentine's Day from Patti Smith (a.k.a. Mug Club Member 784)

For awhile, Jeff and I had been searching for a place (and by “place”, I do mean “bar”) to call our own. We tried Bar A near our house, and it was too smoky and the beer too generic. We tried Bar B in downtown and it was too trendy and the beer too overpriced. Then, in about January of 2007, we tried the Corner Brewery and, like Little Bear's bed, it was just right.

Prior to establishing ourselves as “regulars” anywhere, we had a few criteria: atmosphere, bartenders and, of course, beer. Here is a rundown of why we love our CB.

Atmosphere: The Corner has three public parts to it: the beer garden, the tasting room and the lounge. The lounge has the television sets and comfortably worn couches and chairs. The tasting room has more well-loved furniture, the booths and the bar. When you sit at the bar (like we do), you get to stare out at the outdoor beer garden and it's sometimes better than anything you could see on TV. The chairs at the bar are all “sponsored” by folks who originally invested in the place (I really wish I'd known about this, because I would have dug through the change in my couch for this opportunity). Behind the bar is where the magic (read: beer) happens.

The colors are all subdued darks—none of that electric blue and pink metallic stuff or those “stand up” tables (sorry, but the idea of standing up at a table is counterintuitive to me) that haunt some of the trendy spots. There is no smoking at the Corner (except in the beer garden). There are games to play (I suggest Roll a Role when you are really, really drunk), books to read and free wi-fi. Since those are three things that could keep me occupied for years, I could easily go to the Corner and never leave...except that they do close. Their hours are 2:00pm—midnight (except for Sundays when it is 2:00pm—10:00pm).

People at the Corner: Rather than saying what sorts of folks that I didn't want to find at my “regular bar”, I will be positive and talk about the sorts of folks that I did want to find there. Specifically, I was hoping for laid back folks, who weren't totally career obsessed, who didn't want to blab about their hefty mortgages or diverse portfolios and who liked good beer. Found it! I've heard nary a mention of stocks and bonds while drinking at the Corner.

It's rather cheesy to say that Jeff and I were hoping for a place where, uh, “everybody would know our names”, but that's kinda what we wanted. Essentially, I wanted a place where I would be comfortable going by myself and sitting at the bar. Again, found it! Every bartender that we've met there has been friendly, attentive and very knowledgeable about the beer. Even when they are busy, they will go out of their way to chat with us and make sure that we are being served. And yes, they do know our names (some even know our mug club numbers by heart!)

The Beer: There are regular beers at the Corner, plus special releases. The regulars include the Sacred Cow IPA (my personal favorite), Red Snapper Amber Ale, Olde Number 22 Alt Bier and the Brasserie Blonde. They currently also have Espresso Love (featuring coffee from a local coffee shop), the Jackhammer, Phat Abbot Dubbel, Ypsi Gypsi (surprisingly hoppy) and Larry Hoppe (extremely hoppy). Those lovable rascals also came up with some awesome mixed beers—ask for a Working Girl, Love Hammer or Farmer's Daughter next time you are there.

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What's the deal with continental European bands having more creative names than their Anglophone counterparts? The Go Find, an indie-electronica venture created by Belgian musician Dieter Sermeus, follows in the footsteps of France's Phoenix — but in cool name only. Musically, the five-piece Flemish group is far calmer and sweeter than its creatively titled friends. [read more](#)

Keeping in mind that we are not professional beer reviewers, here are some thoughts from Jeff and me about the tasty beer. Jeff likes the Olde 22 the best, saying that it's like a light porter, with a hint of coffee taste. I love my IPA, which is nicely hopped and smooth. When I'm not in the mood to drink a heavy beer, I go for the Ypsi Gypsi, which is about 5% and has a lovely hit of hops. When I am in the mood for something heavy, I always go for the E-Love, which is a coffee stout that is heavier without being overbearing. It has a lovely aroma and nice finish. Jeff also prefers the dubbel and trippel, which are Belgian trappists (8% and 9% abv, respectively).

If you join the mug club, you get your own personalized mug and beer discounts. You also get into the beer release parties for free. That is, whenever the Corner (and now, Arbor) releases a beer, you get to drink that beer free and eat the free snacks during the release party. As they say, you can't beat that with a stick.

Extras: One of my favorite things at the Corner is the Rat Pad, which allows local homebrewers (and the staff brewers) to experiment with different kinds of beer. On the third Wednesdays, they release a new, small batch beer. Last year, a friend of ours helped brew a very tasty red IPA. Other friends have brewed beers including the infamous chips and salsa beer (and, as God as my witness, it tasted like chips and salsa!).

Another cool thing about the Corner is the way they open up their space to community organizations. I've seen the Shadow Art Fair there, an indoor farmers' market, political groups, environmental groups, singers, bands...but the epiphany for me was Election Day, 2008. I will honestly never forget sitting in the lounge, sinking into a comfortable chair surrounded by friends and beer. Every time a new "blue state" came on one of the TVs, the bar shook with applause and noise as if the football team had just won it all. (I realize that everyone might not share this political bent, but please don't let this get in your way of a good time.)

Food: I personally love the new menu changes. The pizza is awesome and I am particularly fond of the chicken barbecue pizza. (I do pick off the chicken and eat it separately, which of course isn't technically Kosher but I hope that God gets a kick out of it). I also recommend the black bean and cheese quesadillas. If you are looking for a snack, go for the pita and hummus.

I can't think of a single complaint about my home away from home. But I guess if I had to list a fuss, I'd say that I wish they were right next door to me in Ann Arbor. But if they were, then they wouldn't be my Corner.

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