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## Tröegs Brewing Company: handcrafted food and beer

September 25, 2014 – Marc d'Entremont - [LINK](#)



ABOVE: VIDEO 3:18 by PAPPreferred

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=zUnZZwZTJL0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=zUnZZwZTJL0)

"A restaurant is a story," says **Christian DeLutis** the thirty-something **Executive Chef** of **Tröegs Brewing Company's Snack Bar**. Once you enter the sleek modern brewery, located next to **Pennsylvania's** famed **Hersheypark**, you may well wonder what is the story? Sharing the same space as the brewery's expansive **beer** tasting room, a customer can certainly order fries, popcorn or a grilled cheese sandwich. Yet that's where any similarity to average pub food ends.



Photo by Marc d'Entremont



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The hand-cut fries are served with aromatic hop oil and spicy ketchup. The popcorn may be seasoned with rosemary brown butter and sea salt, and the grilled sandwich will have three cheeses. Or you can try one of their specials of the day from the blackboard such as beef pot roast with root vegetables, duck fat mashed potatoes and a rich demi-glace, served in a mason jar. If this sounds too esoteric for a brewery in rural Pennsylvania then you haven't been to Tröegs when up to 2,000 customers a day flock to the Snack Bar.

Chef Christian DeLutis, who grew up in rural central Pennsylvania, started his career as an English teacher before turning towards food. After completing culinary arts training in Pittsburgh, he spent time cooking in Ireland before moving to the Washington DC and Baltimore area, moving up the ranks in top restaurant kitchens. His grandparents made their own sausage and salami, but Christian was classically trained under French chefs.

This doesn't mean the tasting room at Tröegs Brewing Company is white table clothes and suited waiters. It's in the middle of a busy working brewery; there are long wooden tables and no waiters. Orders are placed at the Snack Bar counter, and you'll have it in your hands within seven minutes. "It's food that works with beer," Christian states simply, even if it's succulent, slow cooked sous-vide duck leg confit.

Chef DeLutis has based his menu concept on the popularity of locally sourced ingredients in the preparation of imaginative dishes being served in California's prestigious wineries. Considering the explosion of national interest in fine craft beers, it's only natural upscale breweries would follow suit. It's to Tröegs benefit that [Hershey](#) is in the middle of the legendary [Pennsylvania Dutch](#) region known for the excellence of its agricultural abundance.



The [Snack Bar](#) sources much of its ingredients directly from local farms, orchards and dairies including fresh oysters from the Chesapeake. Christian believes in preserving as much summer produce as time allows. Personal relationships are cultivated with farmers and local producers to obtain the freshest ingredients such as local butter, lamb and beef. The Snack Bar staff of 30 includes bakers and butchers. They fabricate the cuts from the whole animal. One farmer buys the beer mash to feed to his cattle and then sells the cattle to the kitchen – the circle of life.

They cure their own bacon, prepare the sausages and pates, smoke their own briskets and make extensive use of [sous-vide](#) cooking which slowly infuses flavors into vacuum sealed ingredients creating dishes that improve while being held under refrigeration and are easily reheated. Even what products are not locally produced are customized, such as the large soft pretzels. They're imported raw frozen from Bavaria, dipped in beer and topped with toasted malted barley from the brewery before baking.

Chef DeLutis creates the menu with staff input. There will always be standard items he says, but the menu reflects seasonal changes and when new beers are released. He strives to maintain a lighthearted but disciplined atmosphere both in the kitchen as well as the dining space, which is shared with the beer-tasting bar. Promoting from within and encouraging staff members to engage in continuing their culinary development is important. Currently the cooks are writing reports on ingredient requirements that'll serve as the basis of ongoing discussions with the farmers.

But does smoked lamb sausage with lemon marmalade, roasted beef marrow bones and rosemary ice cream on a fresh plum tart make business sense? "Snack Bar revenue equals retail beer sales, which came as a surprise," says Chef DeLutis with genuine modesty. But a brewery is about beer, and the Tröegs brothers don't disappoint.

Founded 20 years ago by brothers who grew up in the [Hershey/Harrisburg](#) area and became interested in home brewing, [Tröegs](#) has grown prodigiously with national distribution. They employ three microbiologists to keep their proprietary yeast strains healthy. The brewery propagates its own yeast. The hops are from the Pacific Northwest.

[Brooke, our knowledgeable brewery tour guide](#), stopped half way during the tour of the compact, nearly Rube Goldberg like, modern facility to climb up one of the vast stainless steel fermentation vats and siphoned off fresh beer. It was a unique tasting to experience an almost ready craft brew. The actual tasting of several Tröegs beers took place next to the active bottling station.

Golden Dream Weaver Wheat was a peppery pilsner with German hops and back notes of banana. Troegegenator Double Bock was an 8.2% alcohol dark, full-bodied brew with notes of brown sugar, molasses and malt. Perpetual IPA is a homage to the best of Northwest Pacific Coast hops with back notes of pine and mint. Visitors can opt for a self-guided wander behind glass walls with lengthy storyboards.

Tucking into lunch was sheer pleasure reminiscent to this chef-writer of French country bistros. The charcuterie board was an artfully arranged selection of house cured meats, duck, chicken and foie gras pate, smoked trout mousse and chicken liver mousse. It was paired with an equally fine cheese board featuring Double Gloucester, Brigante, Buttermilk Blue and Smoked Gouda. The soup of the day was earthy charred sweet pepper bisque blended with goat cheese cream. And the Bavarian Oktoberfest pretzel was sheer fun with its coating of malted barley adding a counterpoint to the soft, warm dough. All paired well with the corked, slightly carbonated, Belgian style LaGrave Triple Golden Ale.

[Tröegs Brewing Company and Snack Bar, Hershey, PA, is open all year with a busy regular clientele. Opening hours: Sunday – Wednesday 11:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Thursday – Saturday until 10:00 p.m.](#)

[Disclosure: the author was a guest of the Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau.](#)