



by Ken Quaas

## New Cone Top Museum exhibit brings this celebration to life through breweriana

Note: All breweriana pictured here is part of the Cone Top Brewery Museum Collection.

Cloth chef's hat and apron, styled for outdoor barbecuing and labeled with Drewrys Beer, c. 1960.



# Picnic beer and the joys of summer

**Big D** makes the Big Difference in **FUN**

**NOW READ THIS!** What makes any meal fun? Congenial folks, delicious food—and Big D, Drewrys, the beer that makes both good friends and good food more enjoyable.

Why does Big D make such a big difference in fun? Because Big D is the quality beer with the one big difference—More Flavor, Less Filling. And this difference is important whether you're planning a picnic, a party or a meal at home. Remember —Drewrys brews flavor in, sweetness out, so you can enjoy glass after glass with no full feeling after.

Planning a get-together soon? Take out fun-insurance . . . stock up big on Big D . . . Drewrys, the beer that makes the Big Difference in Fun. And it's always sold at a popular price.

**DREWRY'S BEER**

Some beers are too heavy ... Some beers are too light ... **Big D** is always just right **MORE FLAVOR, LESS FILLING**

Drewrys Limited U.S.A. Inc., South Bend, Indiana

Print ad for Drewrys Beer, Drewrys Limited USA, Inc., South Bend, IN. This exuberant print ad featuring a distinctive picnic scene appeared in *Look Magazine* on August 6, 1960.



Metal cooler for Drewrys Beer, c. late 1950s.

Summer is so much more than just a season. It's the time to slow down the tempo of life and take a break from school or work. The sun is shining, the weather is warm, and the great outdoors is beckoning. It is a time when you can feel the thrilling sense of freedom and enjoy life to the fullest.

One of the time-honored ways to celebrate summer and experience the outdoors is by eating outside—having a barbecue or going on a picnic. The term “picnic” originates from the 17th-century French word *pique-nique*, which describes a less formal, social, potluck-style meal where people came together and brought food and wine. It combines the words *piquer* (to pick or peck) with *nique* (a small or insignificant thing). Initially, a pique-nique was characterized by having a variety of small bites to pick at and savor.

The idea caught on through Western Europe and evolved into an outdoor eating event in summertime. The Germans called



Self-framed tin sign, Potosi Beer, Potosi Brewing Co., Potosi, WI, 31 x 21 in., by the Meek Co., Coshocton, OH, c. 1901-1909.

This beautiful scene of men and women enjoying a summer picnic is titled “Camping on the Mississippi.”

Acquired from the Haydock Collection.

it a “picknick” and of course, their accompanying beverage of choice was beer.

### Picnics in America

The British and Americans were also early adopters of what they came to term a “picnic.” In the U.S., the picnic grew in popularity and practice in the late 1800s. This was a time when Americans lived in an increasingly industrialized society and had grown accustomed to working long, tedious hours, often cooped up indoors in factories or offices.

When leisure time finally came and the weather was warm enough, time spent in the fresh air and sunshine became a highly coveted respite.

Continued on page 22

Cardboard sign in original wood frame for Kato Beer, Mankato Brewing Co., Mankato, MN, 18 x 14 in., no mfg. mark, c.1940.

The artwork is titled “A Typical Minnesota Scene” and features men at a traditional wooden picnic table who are playing poker while they take a break from fishing.

It was created by noted artist George Hinke, (1883-1953) a German-born painter who came to the United States in 1923. Hinke was commissioned by *Ideals Magazine* to create works depicting American small-town life, religious scenes and Christmas themes in his classic, nostalgic style.



In the meantime, labor unions fought to regulate these poor working conditions and in 1884, a national holiday to honor workers was instituted and named, “Labor Day.” Not surprisingly, that holiday became closely associated with picnics.

As the 1900s progressed, automobiles became more affordable, and correspondingly, new roads and highways were created. This allowed an easier escape from crowded cities to parks, lakes, and the countryside to enjoy time with family and friends. Picnics became a natural activity for these kinds of short escapes.

### Changes in lifestyle and technology

In the 1930s, the five-day work week became a standard, and the resulting “weekends” were more focused on family, friends, and leisure time. The Federal Government—and many cities—invested in creating parks, which often included picnic facilities like tables, grills, and shelters.

After the trauma of World War II, Americans often sought solace and tranquility in nature—actively pursuing outdoor enjoyment through activities like camping, fishing, hunting, and of course, picnicking. America also experienced



Print ad for Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer, Pabst Brewing Co., Milwaukee, WI. This 1952 Labor Day-themed magazine ad promotes Pabst as a part of outdoor-themed meals like picnics and backyard barbecues.

huge geographic shifts in population, with the development of the suburbs. These suburbs typically had more readily accessible backyards, green spaces, and parks than urban living. The myriad of outdoor recreation facilities provided by suburbs were inviting settings for picnics.

By the 1950s, advancements in technologies and new products like outdoor cooking equipment and pre-packaged foods made the ability to prepare and transport food and beverages to picnics even easier.

A simple, but important improvement in keeping food fresher and beverages colder was the introduction of modern, portable coolers in the early 1950s. These were first made from durable, galvanized steel and later, from lightweight soft vinyl, plastic, or insulated foam. These often replaced the old school wicker baskets that had been traditionally associated with picnics.

### The central role of beer

Beer played a central—and evolving—role in American picnics throughout the 20th century. This is clearly evident in the considerable variety and quantity of picnic-themed beer advertising. In the early 1900s before Prohibition, beer was a common and socially accepted picnic beverage, especially among working-class and immigrant (especially German) communities.

Breweries often had beer gardens, where families and friends gathered to relax together with food, music, and beer—the cultural social lubricant. There were even “picnic” labeled beers and those which came in “picnic sized” bottles that were as large as 64 ounces and meant to serve many.

Continued on page 24



Cardboard transit ad with outdoor barbecue theme for Falls City Beer, Falls City Brewing Co., Louisville, KY, no mfg. mark, 28 x 11, c. 1960.

# The Gingham tablecloth



Paper, folded retailer brochure with a summer-theme for Falstaff Beer, Falstaff Brewing Co., St. Louis, MO and other locations, c. 1965.



Die-cut cardboard sign for Red Top Beer and Ale, Red Top Brewing Co., Cincinnati, OH, 21¼ x 26½ in., dated 1950.



Lighted sign, plastic in metal frame for Ballantine Beer, P. Ballantine Brewing Co., Newark, NJ, 9.5 x 25 in., by Neon Products Inc., Lima, OH, dated 1964.



Plastic-over-cardboard sign for Wiedemann Beer, Wiedemann Brewing Co., Newport, KY, 18¾ x 12 ¼ in., by Embosograph Display Mfg. Co., Chicago, IL, c. 1970.

The visuals on these artifacts portray classic picnic scenes using the iconic red checked, gingham tablecloth. This checked pattern became synonymous with the classic, All-American picnic.

Traditionally, gingham was a cotton weave made with dyed yarn woven to form a two-color checked pattern, most often red and white.

Gingham is believed to have originated in Southeast Asia. It later gained popularity in

Europe—especially in France and Italy, where it was associated with rustic, simple meals,

often in natural outdoor settings. The red and white gingham pattern fit a similar cultural image in the U.S.. It became associated with rural life, homemade food, informal outdoor dining, and of course, picnics.

It became a staple fabric for tablecloths because it was durable, easy to clean, and its pattern hid stains well—perfect for picnics.

During Prohibition, soft drinks, near beers and other low-alcohol malt beverages had to suffice when picnicking. But after Repeal, beer once again became pivotal to picnics. The introduction of canned beer in the mid-1930s proved especially valuable—it made transport easier with packaging that was both lighter in weight and less breakable than glass bottles.

By the 1950s, beer continued its strong link with casual, outdoor dining —both via backyard barbecues and away-from-home picnics. Beer advertising of this era was—and still is today—rife with images of people enjoying food, socializing, and having fun while outside.

Today, picnics have cemented their association with fundamental American values—family bonding, relaxation, and experiencing the great outdoors. And always, there is cool, refreshing beer that is an integral part of the picnic and the joys of summer.

## Cone Top Celebration

The Cone Top Brewery Museum is celebrating “Picnic Beer and the Joys of Summer” in its newest exhibition. This will be an immersive experience—like the “Northern Lights” show of 2024—that will bring to life the imagery depicted in the picnic-themed beer advertising and breweriana of the past.

This memorable exhibit will invoke the exhilarating, nostalgic feeling of freedom that comes when relaxing with savory food and cold beer in the summer outdoors.

**NABA members can experience the “Picnic beer and the joys of summer” exhibit exclusively at the Cone Top Brewery Museum in Vicksburg, MI on June 12-13, and at the NABA Convention in King of Prussia, PA from July 27-August 1.**

## The cooler



Painted metal cooler for Gottelman Milwaukee Beer, A. Gottelman Brewing Co., Milwaukee, WI, 13 ¼ x 12 ¾ in., by H. Sterling Mfg. Co. Inc., Wichita, KS, c. 1950s.



Aluminum cooler for Pfeiffer Famous Beer, Pfeiffer Brewing Co., Detroit, MI, 22 x 13½ in., by Cronstroms Mfg. Inc., Minneapolis, MN, c. late 1950s.



Soft-sided, vinyl cooler called a “Goe-pak” for Goebel Brewing Co., Detroit, MI, 9½ x 7 in., no mfg. mark, c. 1959.

A compelling invention to advance the art of the picnic was the “portable ice chest,” more commonly known as a “cooler.” Some examples from the Cone Top Collection are shown here.

In the U.S., the Coleman Company, of Wichita, KS, famed maker of camping equipment, introduced its first galvanized steel cooler in 1954, and followed that up in 1957 with an insulated foam cooler, which was much more lightweight.

Cronstroms Mfg. Inc. was a Minneapolis, Minnesota-based manufacturer in the 1950s and 1960s that became renowned for producing durable, aluminum coolers and picnic chests. These were often branded with a beer or soft drink name as promotional giveaways.

Later, soft-sided, insulated coolers made of vinyl and nylon were introduced, offering both durability and easy portability.

# The wicker basket



Double-sided cardboard sign for Utica Club Beer, F.X. Matt Brewing Co., Utica, NY, 18½ x 15½ in., no mfg. mark, c. 1950s.

Lithograph with calendar for Bavarian Brewing Co., Covington, KY, 16¾ x 24 in. by The Eagle Lithographing Co., Cincinnati, OH, dated 1899.

Acquired from the Haydock Collection.

Cardboard sign for Stroh's Bohemian Beer, The Stroh Brewery Co., Detroit, MI, 17½ x 23 in., c. early 1960s. The "No Deposit/No Return" bottle was introduced in 1961.

Serving tray, Erie Brewing Co., Erie, PA, 12 in., no mfg. mark, c. 1915.



Traditionally, a rectangular wicker basket with a handle came to signify what became widely recognized as a "picnic basket." These wicker baskets were commonly used from the late 1800s through the 1950s and can be seen here on these brewery pieces.

Wicker is a weaving technique and is typically made from material like willow, rattan, or reeds. Wicker baskets are sturdy, lightweight, and

breathable, ideal for carrying food. Before modern coolers and plastics, a wicker basket kept items from getting crushed and allowed airflow preventing picnic foods from getting soggy.

Wicker baskets proved a practical way to transport full meals outdoors, to include not only food, but also dishes, glasses, utensils and bottles of beer or wine.