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Upright Brewing

240 N Broadway, Left Bank Project, Portland
Tours by appointment only

If you didn't know what you were looking for, you would probably have no idea that the basement of the still-mostly-empty Left Bank Project Building is home to some truly kick-ass beer. Listening to Upright owner and brewmaster Alex Ganum talk about his take on brewing evokes the fluid compositional style of improv jazz, which is entirely appropriate. His brewery's moniker is, after all, a tribute to the great upright bass player and American composer Charles Mingus.

Ganum moved to Portland to attend culinary school, and though he realized long before finishing that his heart was in beer, not food, he did complete his coursework "for the sake of finishing something." When it came time to do his internship hours, he asked if he could do them at a brewery. Much to his surprise, the dean said yes, and Ganum winged his way to upstate New York to Brewery Ommegang. Upon returning to Portland, Ganum worked as the lead brewer for BJ's and then began laying the groundwork for opening his own craft brewery. In late March 2009, his dream became Upright.

What Ganum wants you to know is that though he uses Belgian yeast and traditional farmhouse-style open-barrel fermentation, he isn't making Belgian beer. As a matter of fact, he gets much of his inspiration working with local, organic ingredients. Right now, Upright is rocking four year-rounders, named simply "4," "5," "6," and "7," reflecting the starting gravity of each, though plans are in the works to experiment with a number of seasonal recipes.

You can find Upright beers, including the extra-dry, uber-refreshing wheat variation, "4," at Portland outposts like Horsebrass, Bailey's Taproom, and Concordia Ale House.

Tours of Upright are by prior arrangement only. If you are interested, Ganum requests that you contact him via email at uprightbrewing@gmail.com

-Terese Reynolds