



Cheers to the Michigan Winter Beer Festival!



MICHIGANDERS are hardy souls...they'll climb massive ice formations, sit on frozen lakes in search of fish, craft elaborate outhouses for winter festival races and spend hours standing around outside drinking local beer with likeminded individuals braving the elements.

The Michigan Brewers Guild's 17th Annual Winter Beer Festival (Saturday, February 25, 2023 at LMCU Ballpark in Comstock Park, just north of Grand Rapids) is a celebration of the winter season which has entertained tens of thousands of beer lovers for nearly two decades.

The first Michigan Winter Beer Festival was held on February 25, 2006 on Turner Street at Grand River in Old Town Lansing. Just 40 breweries participated, serving a mere 160 different beers to about 1,200 thirsty

festivalgoers. Those numbers grew minimally the following year and in 2008, the Guild – under the direction of its new Executive Director, Scott Graham, moved the event an hour west to the Grand Rapids area.

“We came to a point where we needed to expand our festival footprint to accommodate anticipated growth,” says Scott Graham, the Guild’s executive director. “It turned out to be a great move as Grand Rapids ultimately became known as Beer City USA. Like many communities in Michigan, the brewing industry has become a key part of the fabric and culture of life in GR and that contributes to our festival attendance.”

One particularly romantic story comes from 2010 Winter Beer Festival. Willy Beach (from Grand Rapids) and Kirri Reitan (from Chicago) attended that year with their respective friends, meeting toward the end of the event. There was an instant connection and in October 2013, they were married. Attending Winter Beer Festival together has become a tradition – since it was the place where “it” all began for them.

Over the years, interest in the festival kept growing and growing. In 2012, the festival sold out 6,000 tickets in just three weeks. It took just 13 hours to sell out in 2013 but it was 2014 that threw the Guild for a tailspin when 6,400

tickets were gone in a record three hours!

Tapping into the snowballing popularity and in celebration of its 10th anniversary, the festival was expanded to two days in 2015 with a Friday evening session – including fireworks – added before the traditional Saturday afternoon festivities. In all, more than 10,000 people gathered that weekend in the outfield parking lot to sample from over 1,000 beers brought in from more than 100 Michigan breweries, listen to music of The Concussions and The Moxie Strings, tap the ceremonial keg and sign the Michigan Beer Fight Song.

What is it about the Michigan Winter Beer Festival that continues to draw the crowds, despite the weather?

“Even the cold of February can't dampen the desire for fresh, Michigan beer here in the Great Beer State,” says Scott Graham, Executive Director of the Michigan Brewers Guild. “The Winter Beer Festival is extremely popular and hardy souls look forward to getting outside and sharing a local beer, good company and good times.”

As with all of the Guild’s festivals, the event is held rain or shine, snow or sleet (although the 2018 event was postponed a week due to flooding in the stadium parking lot and in 2021,



it was cancelled due to the pandemic). Creative outfits or costumes – including but not limited to retro snowsuits, moon boots, hockey jerseys, Stormy Kromer hats and Carhartt jackets – are encouraged, but not required. While LMCU provides concessions (including smoked turkey legs), attendees are invited to bring in their own food like wearable snacks – necklaces adorned with pretzels, packaged cookies and crackers, pizza slices and fried chicken in Ziplock bags, meat sticks and the like (be creative).

Tickets for the 17th Annual Michigan Winter Beer Festival are on sale now at www.mibeer.com.

THE MBG 2023 FESTIVAL SCHEDULE INCLUDES:

- **Winter Beer Festival** – Saturday, February 25 at LMCU Ballpark in Comstock Park (Grand Rapids)
Tickets on sale now at www.mibeer.com/Events/winter-beer-festival-1
- **Spring Beer Festival** – Saturday, May 7 at Turtle Creek Stadium in Traverse City
General admission tickets go on sale on Thursday, February 9 at www.mibeer.com/Events/spring-beer-festival
- **Summer Beer Festival** – Friday, July 22 & Saturday, July 23 at Riverside Park in Ypsilanti
General admission tickets go on sale on Thursday, April 28 at 10am
- **U.P. Fall Beer Festival** – Saturday, September 10 at Mattson Lower Harbor Park in Marquette
General admission tickets go on sale on Thursday, June 30 at 10am
- **Detroit Fall Beer Festival** – Saturday, October 22 at Eastern Market in Detroit
General admission tickets go on sale on Thursday, August 4 at 10am

Formed in 1997, the Michigan Brewers Guild represents nearly 300 member breweries. The state's brewing industry contributes more than 21,000 full-time jobs and \$872 million in labor income, with a total economic impact of over \$2.5 billion. In terms of overall number of breweries, microbreweries and brewpubs, Michigan ranks #6 in the nation—supporting its title as “The Great Beer State.”



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