



Clockwise from bottom: David Thuss, London Brewing Co-operative; Dave Cook, Fire Roasted Coffee; Rob Kelly and Cathy Siskind-Kelly, Black Fly Beverage Company; Mike Smith, Toboggan Brewing Co.; Andrew Peters, Forked River Brewing Company; John Parlow, Pulp and Press Juice Company.

# MIXED DRINKS

A thirst for variety puts London's beverage industry on tap.

When the need to wet their whistle strikes, Londoners don't have to venture far from home. From locally brewed beer and raw juices to spirit mixed drinks and organic fair trade coffee, the city is a virtual drinking well of options.

As one of Canada's oldest and most successful companies, Labatt started in London as a small craft brewery founded by John Kinder Labatt in 1847. Today, it is credited with paving the way for London's next generation of beverage producers.

"Labatt put London on the map," says David Thuss, a director at The London Brewing Co-operative. "It provided London with that early reputation of being a beer brewing town. It's now up to craft brewers like us to leverage that legacy."

In recent years, the industry has witnessed an unprecedented wave of interest and demand for craft beer, organic ingredients and locally sourced ingredients. In London, this has fuelled the start up and growth of companies like The London Brewing Co-operative, Forked River Brewing Company, Black Fly Beverage Company, Pulp and Press Juice Company, Fire Roasted Coffee and others. Despite the differences in their products, they all point to one commonality – a

commitment to London as a prime location to build and nurture a successful business.

## A STRONG SPIRIT OF SUPPORT

Cathy Siskind-Kelly, co-founder of Black Fly, cites London's collaborative and supportive business community as an important advantage in a highly competitive industry.

"Londoners are very proud of their businesses. There is a strong spirit of support to shop local and help companies succeed," says Siskind.

Started just 10 years ago, Black Fly, a producer of premium spirit beverages, has experienced over 50% growth over the past two years, selling in every province in Canada but Quebec. Having run seven days and nights per week for 2014/2015, the company recently invested in new state-of-the-art equipment, increasing its output by 500%. Black Fly will begin selling in the U.S.A this spring in Massachusetts, Alabama, Arkansas and Illinois. The company has carved itself a niche with more natural and less sweet innovative quality mixed drinks and unique packaging. The company recently won the coveted Hot, New, Now Media Award at the Wine and Spirit Wholesalers



of America convention in Orlando, Florida. Black Fly will soon launch a new line of straight spirits: Bob's Super Smooth.

### COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

London's entrepreneurial culture is evident at The London Brewing Co-operative where the nano-sized brewery is organized as part of a worker's co-operative sharing space with The Root Cellar Organic and On the Move Organics.

Focused on local, organic and sustainable ingredients, the Brewery has released more than 25 varieties of craft beer since it started in 2014. One of its most popular products, The Local 117 is named in honour of the fact that its ingredients come no farther than 117 kilometres from London.

"The location and proximity to rich and fertile farmland makes it an ideal place to start and grow a business," says David Thuss of The London Brewing Co-operative.

He also points to London's agricultural heritage as key to the collaborative culture.

"Social enterprise is very much a part of this community and our culture. There is an eagerness to leverage relationships and seek synergies with like-minded businesses."

At Fire Roasted Coffee Company, an artisanal coffee roastery, owner Dave Cook agrees that London is garnering national attention because of recent growth in local enterprises.

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– Dave Cook

"It is a strong and emerging trend and we see a lot of mentorship taking place," says Cook. "This industry of specialty beverages is one to watch. It's starting to explode."

Recognized as one of Ontario's finest Specialty Roasters, Fire Roasted has partnered with retailers, cafes and institutions across Ontario. With 95%

of its coffees Fair Trade certified, Organic Certified and shade grown, the company roasts over 50 types of coffee, including over 20 single origins, decafs and blends.

### A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

"I love the local movement that is happening in London. It's industrious and infectious," says John Parlow, co-owner of Pulp and Press Juice

Company, producer of raw, organic, cold pressed juice. Cold-pressed juice takes whole organic fruits and vegetables, puts them through a grinder before the pulp is slowly pressed with a hydraulic cold press.

According to Parlow, the lower costs of living and of running a business gives

London a competitive advantage over other communities. He agrees with his industry colleagues that London's affinity for locally sourced ingredients and high-quality products has been instrumental to the company's growth and success.

Kapil Lakhotia, President and CEO at London Economic Development Corporation (LEDC), is excited by the

exponential growth of London's beverage cluster. The LEDC has provided critical business support to these companies as they have expanded product lines, built new facilities, recruited new talent and set their sights on broader markets.

"London has become a major player in the beverage processing industry," says Lakhotia. "The level of collaboration, the diversity of products and innovation is quite remarkable and we are seeing interest from brewers in other markets who want to locate here."

Forked River Brewing Company is a prime example. In less than three years since start-up, the microbrewery expects to triple its production and release upwards of 250,000 litres of beer annually.

"London has always been identified as a place that is open to new ideas and supports its own," says Andrew Peters, co-founder at Forked River.

He credits the company's success to the ongoing support of the community. The patronage of local bars, suppliers and individual patrons, was instrumental

to Forked River's recent placement in Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) outlets in the region.

"There are real advantages to being part of this cluster," says Peters. "We collaborate on products, share information about processes and learn best practice from each other."

### A PLACE OF OPPORTUNITY

Mike Smith, owner of Toboggan Brewery Co. and a long-standing London entrepreneur, works with other local breweries and serves their products in his restaurants and bars.

"The ideal thing is that we support each other. That is why I carry other beers that some may call competitors," says Smith. "There is room to grow for all of us."

An employer of 200 people across all his establishments, Smith is committed to helping his hometown grow and succeed.

"If you really want to be an entrepreneur, London is a place of opportunity," says Smith. "Costs are lower in comparison to other cities and this city offers a great lifestyle that has everything you need."

At Labatt, General Manager Jake Fenn says London has come a long way since the iconic company was the only brewery in town.

Over the past 170 years, Labatt has evolved into an internationally renowned company with a network of six breweries, 15 sales offices and 23 warehouses and distribution centres stretching from coast to coast.

"Ours is very much a local success story. We owe it to the people of London that we've flourished and grown into the brewery we are today," says Fenn.

▼ Each London Brewing Co-operative beer is made in small batches using ingredients as local and as organic as possible.



▲ Fire Roasted Coffee, one of Ontario's finest Specialty Roasters, has over 50 types of coffee, 95% of which are Fair Trade certified.

▼ Forked River's two flagship beers, as well as seasonal offerings, are sold around the province.



▲ Ontario's first micro distillery, Black Fly offers a wide range of Canadian, craft-produced, not-too-sweet spirit beverages.



► Toboggan Brewery Co. offers 13 delicious and original brews from lagers to ciders.



◀ Labatt products are known around the world.



▲ Created using an industrial grade, hydraulic cold press juicer, each raw Pulp & Press juice contains 3-4 pounds of fresh, organic produce in every bottle.

