



217 BREW WORKS

217 South Street / Wilson, NC 27894

Across from Whirligig Park

Tom Curran - Owner: 513-490-7472 / tom@217brewworks.com

John Kater - Brewmaster: kater@217brewworks.com

John Kater - Brewmaster

John Kater is one of the very few Master Brewers in North Carolina. A native son Georgia and a Veteran of the United States Marines, he moved to Wilson from Salem, Massachusetts with over 25 years of brewing experience at every level of operation. John holds a BS in Fermentation Science from the University of California, Davis, and an MBA specializing in Operations and Entrepreneurship from Kennesaw State University.



John brings with him six award winning Ales that will core our featured offerings; he is committed to the culture and history of his newly claimed home in Wilson, North Carolina, which is much like the town in Georgia where he grew up.

John became interested in brewing and winemaking when he was quite young. At 13, his grandmother told him the story of how she and her brothers used to make root beer on their farm as kids. Inspired by her story, he rode his bicycle to the local junior college and researched “root beer” on the microfiche. He didn’t find anything about root beer, but he found some information on homebrewing and winemaking supplies.

Later that week, John’s mom found he and his little sister stomping on wild grapes in the bathtub. “We’re making a batch of wine,” John explained. His mother decided to count the experiment as “science” and rationalized that it would be a good learning experience. She agreed to let him try to make a batch, secretly hoping that it wouldn’t work. She was wrong. His first wine was good. With his mother’s somewhat reluctant approval, John continued experimenting with winemaking and brewing through high school.

Star Student of his High School, Kater began his college career at Georgia Tech planning to be an Engineer. Ultimately he ended up stepping away from college to learn discipline in the Marine Corps. After boot camp in Parris island and a year in electronics school at 29 Palms, California, he graduated first in his class and was meritoriously promoted to Corporal.

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Following an honorable discharge, he returned to college spending a year at the University of California, Davis majoring in Viticulture and Enology and interning at a méthode champenoise sparkling winery in Sonoma County. He changed focus in his final year at Davis to a brewing program which allowed him to pursue his degree and simultaneously enroll in the Institute of Brewing, London's Master Brewer program. One highlight of this year was personally introducing coffee stouts and rice hulls to the greater brewing community on the same day he was mistakenly arrested over a misunderstanding with the local constabulary because a baggie full of fresh Tettnanger hops protruding from his coat pocket was mistaken for something less legal.

John became the brewmaster of a 7-Bbl micro in Birmingham, Alabama. He was able to max out the brewery capacity in 1995 making the facility the most productive brewery in Alabama. The brewery held that distinction for the remainder of the century. Sadly, financial mismanagement by the owner caused the venture to fail. He emerged from this experience with the ownership of his brands and a determination to resurrect the Southern-approved brews he developed. Wanting to make sure he understood the business as well as the beer, he earned an MBA in operations and entrepreneurship from Kennesaw State University. John has worn many hats in the interim until serendipity led Tom, Barbara, and John to find each other. Together they hope to make it easy and interesting for those who enjoy beer and those who consider themselves beer connoisseurs to find a variety of delicious local brews in our corner of North Carolina.

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