

HighLife

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Beer & bluegrass

Ed Fest returns to The Riverwalk at Edwards; More than 35 breweries will pour and bluegrass band Hot Buttered Rum will perform Saturday

By **Katie Coakley**
Daily Correspondent

In 2011, the question might have been, “who’s Ed?” but now, in its third year, Ed Fest can hold its own. It’s not necessary to find out who Ed is — instead, locals and visitors alike have figured out that “Ed” stands for Edwards, and the beer festival is becoming one of the signature events of the summer.

Bringing together more than 35 breweries, food vendors, live music and a convenient location in The Riverwalk at Edwards, Ed Fest is a laid-back, social event that brings together the Edwards community along with locals from across the valley.

“We’re very excited for Ed Fest this year,” said Claire Plunkett, director of events and sponsorship at Crazy Mountain Brewing Company. “Every year, the event grows and we’re adding new experiences for attendees.”

The event has been growing organically, with approximately 1,000 attendees for the 2012 event. This year, organizers are planning for 1,200 to 1,500 attendees.

Several new elements have been added for the 2013 festival. Several local food vendors will be on hand to satisfy hungry samplers including the Crazy Wagon food truck, Local Joe’s pizza, Caleb’s Catch, Nicky’s Quickie and Montana’s Smokehouse. Also new this year is the Ed Fest VIP Ticket, which grants access to a VIP dinner at Crazy Mountain on Friday night, with specialty beers from select breweries, paired food and live music.

“It’s something out of the ordinary and guests will have the opportunity to taste beers that they’re not going to taste the next day,” Plunkett continued.

For \$65, the VIP ticket not only includes the food and beer dinner, but it also includes admission to Ed Fest (all-you-can-drink), access to a VIP tent for cooling down, food from the Crazy Wagon food truck and a few other perks.

Additionally, for those who want to keep partying after Ed Fest has officially ended, both e|town and Main Street Grill will host after parties starting at 7 p.m. with beer sponsors and drink specials.



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Ryan McFadden, of Eddyline Brewing, center right, and Molley Heynekamp, right, pour samples of Eddyline Brewing beers for Casey Wyse, left, and David Lindal during last year’s Ed Fest at The Riverwalk at Edwards.

BLUEGRASS BACKDROP

Of course, no beer fest is complete without great music, and this year Hot Buttered Rum, a bluegrass band based out of San Francisco, will be providing the rocking backdrop to the festival.

“Edwards and Vail were one of the first places we played in Colorado, 10 years ago,” said Nat Keefe, guitarist and vocalist for Hut Buttered Rum. “It’s always a good time. It seems like the shows here are more visceral, I think because the crowds are all into gravity sports.”

Keefe has plans not only for the brew fest: “I like to start with a Hefeweizen, then move onto a hardcore, hoppy IPA,” but for afterward as well: “We brought our fly-fishing rods.”

“Music has been an integral part of the festival and bluegrass seems to be a particular favorite of the Edwards locals,” Plunkett said. “Hot Buttered Rum is a nationally touring band and we’re thrilled to have them on board.”

While the organizers for Ed Fest have been particular about which breweries are invited, the festival is attracting some well known breweries from outside of Colorado as well.

Becca Peterson, the western slope sales manager for Sierra Nevada explained that “we feel that we fit in with the Colorado breweries, being on the forefront of craft beer. There’s a lot of camaraderie in this business.”

This is the first year that Sierra Nevada will be sampling beer;

IF YOU GO ...

What: Ed Fest. Proceeds from the event benefit the Eagle Valley Land Trust.

When: 3 to 7 p.m.

Saturday.

Where: The Riverwalk at Edwards.

Cost: Tickets are \$35 in advance or \$40 at the door. \$65 VIP tickets are available until Friday.

More information: Visit www.edfestbeer.com or call Crazy Mountain Brewing at 970-926-3009. Advance tickets can be purchased at Crazy Mountain Brewing Company’s Tasting Room or online at www.edfestbeer.com until midnight on Friday. Please leave your dogs at home.



DAVE FLEISHMAN | SPECIAL TO THE DAILY

Vail and Edwards were two of the towns Hot Buttered Rum first played a decade ago when the band was getting its start. The bluegrass group is based out of San Francisco.

they’ll also be participating in the VIP party on Friday evening.

At the end of the day, Ed Fest could be regarded as “just another beer fest,” but there’s something more to it.

“It’s more low-key and a good way to get out and see your friends and catch up,” said Amanda Swanson, who lives in Eagle and attended Ed Fest last year. “It’s nice to have something like this downvalley; it definitely has a community feel.”

Perhaps Keefe sums it up best: “Beer, mountains, fishing and bluegrass — there’s nothing better.”