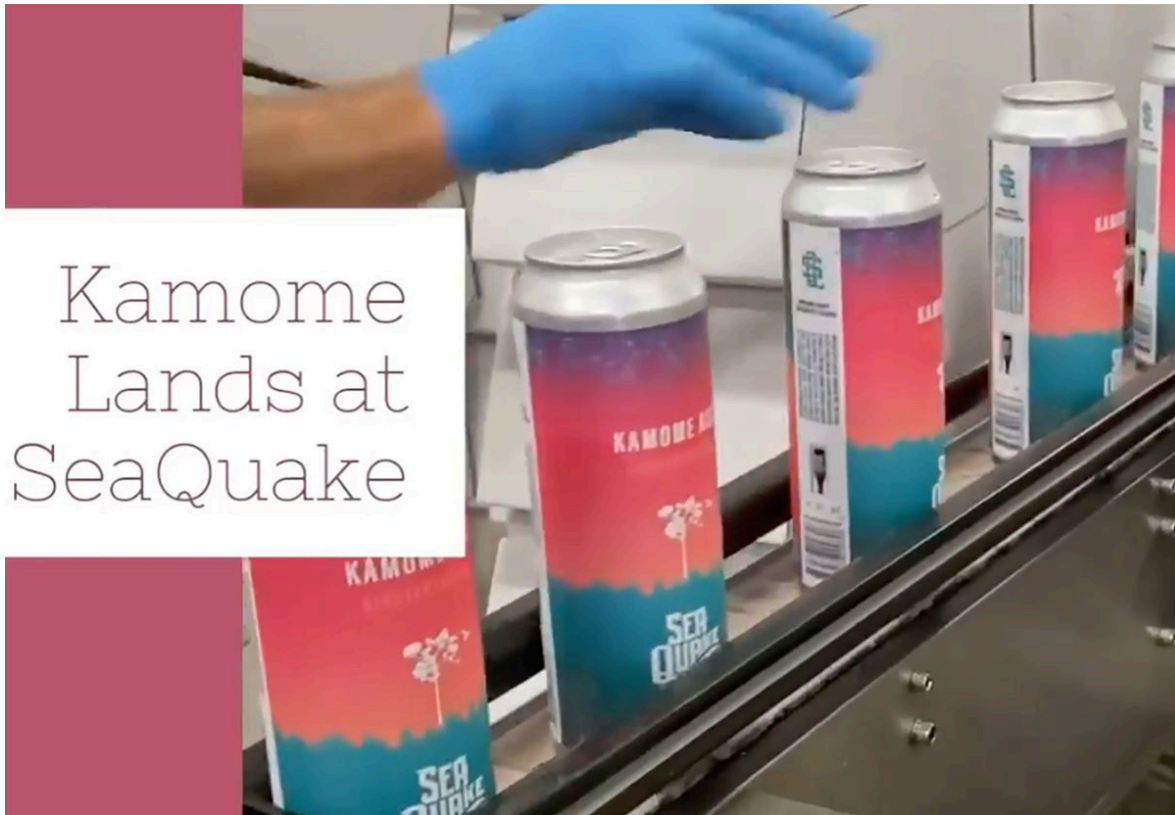


Kamome Ale debuts as tribute to sister city in Japan

July 29, 2020



A week after the documentary “Kamome” paid tribute to the sister city relationship between Crescent City and Rikuzentakata, Japan, a second honorific was released to the public in the form of a special beer.

On July 22, SeaQuake Brewing debuted Kamome Ale. The beer came to fruition years after a conversation over the hood of a pickup truck between the brewery’s cofounder Kevin Hartwick and Crescent City Mayor Blake Inscore.

Inscore said as they were talking about the burgeoning sister city relationship and trying to find something tangible to go with it, he wondered wouldn’t it be neat to produce some kind of beer and name it after that relationship?

“I’m always having these ‘how about’ moments and people usually roll their eyes,” Inscore said. “But after I said how about a beer, Kevin didn’t roll his eyes at me. He kind of looked at me and started thinking.”

Their first thought of naming it Tsunami beer was immediately shot down by Hartwick's brewmaster who confirmed there was already a Tsunami beer. So they instead went with Kamome, the name of the boat that kicked off the relationship in the first place.

After being swept away in a 2011 tsunami that devastated Rikuzentakata, a high school's boat, Kamome, made the epic, almost 5,000-mile journey across the Pacific Ocean to wash ashore in Crescent City more than two years later — on April 7, 2013. Later that year, a delegation from Crescent City returned the boat to its original home in Rikuzentakata, forever endearing the two cities to one another.

As delegations from the cities swapped visits over the years to each other's home, Hartwick sought input from the Japanese to craft the right flavor that paid tribute to Rikuzentakata.

Hartwick said the first draft they served the Japanese delegation was a light lager. But tastes had evolved overseas.

"To our surprise, the delegates, especially the younger ones, were pretty excited about IPAs and other beers," Hartwick said. "Thus began process that lasted another nine months."

He said after some back and forth, they reached a happy medium with a lighter blonde, something he calls drinkable, but not overpowering with alcohol that can reach a wider audience.

"The final product really doesn't reflect our view of the relationship, but theirs. The flavors spoke to them," Inscore said. "My perspective was the purpose. The beer we've given to them shows how we value who they are and what they've been through."

Hartwick said in the documentary "Kamome," NBC Sports producers used footage of a private toast involving prototype cans that more resembled the Oakland Raiders silver and black team colors. The Japanese felt the label was too dark and was not what they wanted, he said.

So with the help of a branding company, the delegations crafted a design featuring key iconography from the two cities - Rikuzentakata's lone surviving "miracle" pine tree and Crescent City's redwoods as a base below. Last was a brighter color scheme, a more environmentally friendly pinkish and green combination.

Hartwick said he hopes Kamome Ale will appeal to a lot of people while continuing to celebrate the sister city relationship.

"The real magic of this beer, this relationship, is it's all part of our 'Going for the Gold' campaign," Hartwick said of the Del Norte/Crescent City Chamber of Commerce's plan to capitalize from the exposure of the documentary's airing during the Japan Olympics. "It was supposed to be a year-long process to take to us from the Olympics and shine a light on both communities, be a golden opportunity to introduce our community to the world."

But with the Olympics postponed to 2021 due to the pandemic, Hartwick said plans changed.

“Our goal is to blow through this COVID thing, expand businesses locally and do cool things with this once in lifetime opportunity,” he said.

The new beer is available on tap at the brewery or in 19.2 ounce cans which Humboldt Beer Distributors and Blach Beverage will be distribute throughout Northern California.