

BEER SHIFT: THE COOP'S COLLABORATION WITH THREES BREWING

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ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

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By Lora Kelley

Beer fans at the Coop know that a tasty selection of seasonal craft brews can often be found on the endcap across from the beer shelves. Lately, that selection includes the first-ever Coop-branded beer.



PHOTO BY KATE PREVITE

Beer Shift is a collaboration between the Coop and Threes Brewing, a craft brewery with a tap room in Gowanus. The current seasonal iteration, a fresh, crisp summer lager, is available in a white can illustrated with a line-drawing of the Coop with yellow accents. The first version of Beer Shift, a malty amber lager, launched earlier this year. Members can look forward to more Beer Shift seasonal beers in the months ahead, Brian Robinson, the Coop beer buyer who led this project, told the *Linewaiters' Gazette*.

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Discussions about a collaboration with Threes Brewing began last September, when Robinson reached out to see if the brewery might be interested in working together. The team at Threes was “very receptive” to the idea, Robinson said. Partnering with Threes felt like a good fit for the Coop: “the brewery seems aligned with the Coop’s brand,” Robinson noted, since “Threes’ brand says quality, local, they care.” Many members are likely familiar with their signature cans, including Vliet pilsner, Logical Conclusion IPA, and Table Beer saison.



The Coop seemed like a natural partner for Threes, too: beyond the two businesses' physical proximity, and the fact that the Coop has stocked its cans since the brewery's early days, the values felt aligned, said Mike Naclerio, Vice President of Sales & Production at Threes. Threes has always striven to be "a part of a broader community, particularly in the Gowanus and Park Slope neighborhood[s]," he said, adding that cooperatives work together "for the greater good of that community. We've always tried to do the same thing through our space."

The Threes team took care of designing the labels—the waves pattern is part of the visual identity of all of its lager beers—and it has versions of the label designed in various colors, for future seasonal editions. Threes commissioned a freelance local designer to come up with a handful of illustrations of the Coop, and ran the drawings by the Coop team. "We went back and forth for a couple rounds of revisions, and ended up, I think, in a really cool place," Naclerio said.

After kicking off the process with Threes, getting Beer Shift on shelves took some time—in part because the government shutdown slowed down the process of getting new alcohol labels approved, Robinson explained. But, once the beer made it onto the shopping floor, the reception among members and staff was enthusiastic. The project, Robinson reflected, “promotes Coop pride, and people should feel proud about the Coop.” The institution can use its stature “for good, for elevating other local and quality vendors,” he said, adding that fellow staffers, including those working on cheese, bags, and T-shirts, have also done great work engaging local businesses through products and community events.



So far, Beer Shift has sold well, too. Members have purchased more than 3,500 cans; the Coop is currently working through the second batch of 100 cases, containing a total of 2,400 cans. The markup is the same as for other beers, Robinson noted, though he has negotiated a lower price from Threes. The beer itself is not custom-made for

the Coop—the summer lager is also sold under other labels, and in the Threes tap-room. But, with the evidence that Coop members would buy enough beer to justify a one-off batch, that may be the way the collaboration goes in the future, Robinson said. “This is a step in the direction of: we can totally sell all that beer.”

Naclerio agreed. Though Threes rarely does one-off projects for partners, “there probably will be something unique, something one-off in nature that goes into the can” for the Coop one day. Whenever the Coop depletes its current run, he said, Threes is ready to go with more beer ideas, and more labels. “It can keep evolving,” he said, and “we can have fun with it together.”

Thus far, there has been “lots of love” for the collaboration, Robinson told the *Gazette*. “The Coop is a fun place,” and this project is “fun and representative of who we are as a community and retailer.”

Lora Kelley is a freelance writer in Brooklyn.