

‘Werking’ on more than just beer: Alewerks Brewing continues its mission to raise funds for charities



Rolling Pin, a white stout-style beer brewed with vanilla and dried jalapenos, was released by Alewerks on Aug. 31. Courtesy of Alewerks

Alewerks Brewing Co. has been serving up more than beer in its nearly 20 years as a community business. The brewery has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for local charities through beer collaborations and other fundraising events.

Perhaps the most unique way Alewerks raised funds for an organization has been through a live auction for Olde Towne Medical & Dental Center last year in which the winning bidder was given a chance to create his own beer for the brewery.

“Alewerks has long supported Olde Towne with nominal donations but they were celebrating their 30th anniversary in 2023, so

we wanted to create something more significant than a gift basket to amplify their milestone gala,” said Michael Claar, operations director for Alewerks.

The concoction, a white stout beer with the moniker Rolling Pin, was created by Craig James, a former pastry chef who also has experience in coffee brewing. The beer was unveiled over Labor Day weekend at Alewerks, which has locations on Ewell Road and at the Williamsburg Premium Outlets on Richmond Road.

“Frankly I was a little worried going into this,” Claar admitted. “Anyone could win and we couldn’t predict their expectations. I was 99% sure the project would result in your standard IPA or easy drinking lager but we hit the jackpot with Craig. He came to the table with a clear, unique vision. Our team has produced countless innovative recipes over 18 years, but I don’t think we ever would have come up with Rolling Pin White Stout without Craig’s involvement.”

James — who lives at Lake Anna but whose father lives in Williamsburg, which brought him to the Olde Town gala — jumped at the chance to create his own beer for a cause. The flavor profile, name and inspiration for the label were all his.

A professionally trained chef, James said the opportunity to work with the experts at Alewerks and develop a unique beer was “very enticing” to me. He also recently was the CEO of a coffee company just outside New York City for six years and worked on many collaborations developing unique coffees, he said.

“I also love to cook and bake, so I figured that we could bring the two disciplines — culinary arts and brewing — together to develop a unique beer that transcends both industries,” James said.

Rolling Pin, a white stout-style beer brewed with vanilla and dried jalapenos, is described as having a “custard-like mouthfeel and whipping topping finish.” The beer, which was released Aug. 31, is available on tap and in 16-ounce four-packs.



Craig James, who won a bid at an auction to create a beer for Alewerks, came up with the flavor profile, name and inspiration for the label. Courtesy of Craig James

“Initially this was planned to be a one-off release, but who knows,” Claar said. “So far, the response has been overwhelmingly positive and it seems Rolling Pin is finding a place alongside other enduring yearly releases inspired by non-traditional flavors and methods.”

James said he’s equally pleased with the product.

“It’s really cool,” James said. “The beer turned out amazing and the artwork is so cool. It was a wonderful opportunity to work with Alewerks to make this happen. The team at Alewerks is truly the best.”

While the winning bid amount was not disclosed, Olde Towne Medical & Dental Center raised over \$75,000 overall during its gala in 2023. Claar, who has been a part of the Alewerks fold for eight years, said the brewery has raised more than \$170,000 for local charities since he’s been with the company.

Alewerks' most substantial beer-related charitable contribution is the 10% of gross profits from the year-round Chesapeake Pale Ale, which is donated to the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Claar said.

"We're also proud of our Teamwerks series of beers that allows us to spotlight the causes that matter to the Alewerks team and the organizations that make a difference in our community. We donate a portion of revenue from the release days plus \$1 from every can sold."

Recent Teamwerks releases include CASA Kolsch, benefitting Colonial CASA; Love is Love, benefitting Hampton Roads Pride; and Collective Efforts, benefitting the Pink Boots Society.

Alewerks will next partner with the Junior Woman's Club of Williamsburg this Saturday for its annual Jubilee birthday celebration. The event, which will be held from noon to 10 p.m., will feature live music, food and craft beer to benefit the club. There will be an artisan market and 50/50 raffles, with 10% of sales going back to the organization. VIP tickets cost \$50.

For more details on Saturday's event, visit [facebook.com/events/881109120735078](https://www.facebook.com/events/881109120735078).

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