



Brewhaha #6: Flatbread Company, Portland ME

OK, I don't know much about this Flatbread bushwa; sounds like a bakery to me. But it was listed as a brewhaha on my web sources, so I figured I'd give it a fair shake.

It was just a few-block walk from Gritty's, down on the waterfront. Night had arrived in Portland shortly after I had, and it was a good dark walk through the city streets. In some places this might've been daunting, but I had the attitude of "it's freaking *Maine*, what can happen?"

Nothing did, of course. It's Maine.

The seaport was pretty cool, I guess, from what I could see of it. It was pretty big, but you'd expect that in a city called PORT-land. It was too dark to get a good lookaround, and I was too focused on my next beer anyway. Maybe Next Time.

Flatbread was on one pier or wharf (or whatever you call those things), and there was a long low building on an opposing wharf or pier (or whatever you call those things) that looked cool enough to warrant a photo. But, like almost all of the low-light pix on this trip, I bothered with neither flash nor tripod, just held the little Canon Powershot as steady as my current state would allow, and clicked away.

Not surprisingly, the seaside scene came out blurry. But it still looked kinda OK, so I did some Photoshop oil painting effect with it and it's actually a pretty good memory of the scene now. And memory was beginning to lose some lucidity.

So, I walks into Flatbread and it hits me pretty quick that this is a restaurant, not



a brewpub, or even bar. In fact, it's a trendy chain of organic pizza places, with other "green" foods to boot. Not that you'd actually boot them.

Another thing that was really wrong: kids. Yeah, families with kids. You're not finding them in the pubs and such that I was after.

BUT, the place did have a kind of unpretentious, low-budget, unfinished, basement quality that did appeal to me. The lighting was hack, and the big pipes and vent boxes hung undisguised from the

rough ceiling. Handmade signs hung here and there, and a classic stone oven dominated the middle of the long wall. So since I was here, I'd stay for a beer, dear.

The bar itself was like a large wooden box turned on its side, with very basic stools. Again, nothing impressive except how unimpressive it was. I liked it

immediately. The barkeep was kinda like that too. Low-20's, tan plaid shorts, a dark t-shirt, and a marginally cool hat. His demeanor was similar, as well: an easy going, unhurried, shrug-it-off-if-it-bugs-you kind of dude.

They had no brews of their own making -- which made me wonder how they were even on the list -- but Shipyard was a Maine brew, so I went for their Export Ale. It was a good sequel to the afternoon's Shipyard Ale.

I gave him a brief lowdown of the NEBPT, and lamented this afternoon's miss-outs. He quickly proved his worth as a bit character in this drama, letting me know that Sebago Brewing Company had not folded up their behind-the-mall site for lack of business, but for a location upgrade to downtown, a mere 5-6 blocks away. Great news, indeed!

A couple about my age came in and sat down around then, and we somehow fell into conversation. Not sure what prompted it, maybe some comment by the barkeep that we both had a stake in. That happened a lot when I was tending; I'd throw out some remark that was general enough to take root in any garden, and when the two strangers both responded, I could stroll away and get some work done while they talked.

Anyway, these two were celebrating their 33rd anniversary. They were former hippies who still showed it around the edges. Both had long hair that was mostly dark and uncombed, and he wore a Harley-Davidson t-shirt. She did all the talking, and he nodded and chuckled a lot.

She pressed the topic of why I never got married, and I gave her the old, "some people are made to be married, others are meant to be solo." Initially, that did nothing to deter her, but she finally saw the sense in it. It was a good-natured convo all round anyway, and I walked away with renewed affirmation of my singularity.

I finished my Export, bid them a good next 33 years, thanked the barkeep for his guidance, and sauntered off into the Portland night in search of Sebago.