



*Indigo Imp's packaging sets them apart. One bottle in every six-pack is sealed with wax.*

# Mastering the Little Blue Devil

*Cleveland's Indigo Imp Brewery keeps brother hopping.*

*By: Kellsey Miller*

**A**fter home brewing for more than 15 years, Kathy, *Bowling Green State*, and Matt Chappel launched Indigo Imp Brewery in 2008. They had talked about opening a brewery for five years and finally said "if we don't do this now, we can never speak of it again." The brewery now occupies a little over 3,000 square feet in downtown Cleveland and has been brewing beer for more than two years with an ever growing

group of fans who appreciate their unique approach to brewing.

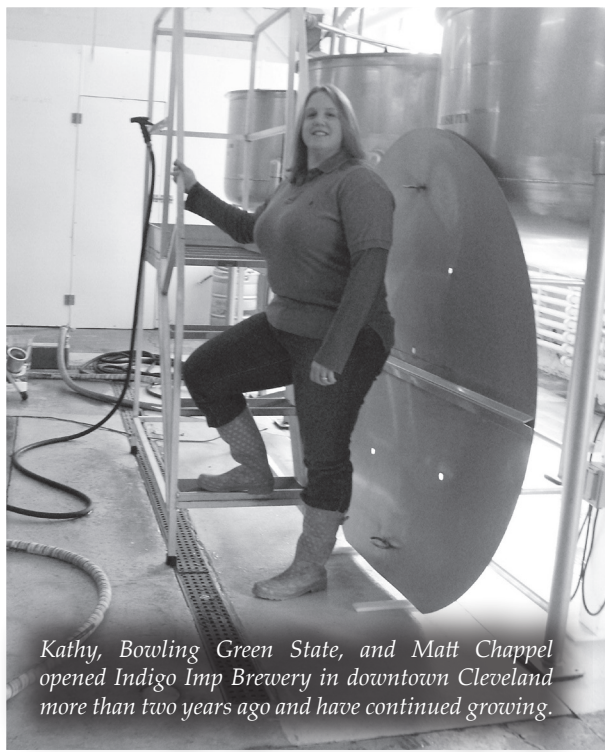
When Kathy and Matt opened Indigo Imp, they wanted to offer something original to the Cleveland market. The Indigo Imp Brewery uses an open fermentation process which is common at traditional European breweries. Using the open fermentation process allows the brewery to make its own mark because it offers customers flavors

they may have rarely experienced in beer. It allows wild yeast to influence each batch because the soon-to-be beer is exposed to the air. This results in slight flavor variations from batch to batch and season to season. The beer at Indigo Imp is also not filtered and is bottle conditioned, meaning that the carbonation process takes place inside the bottle. Indigo Imp recommends customers drink their beer from a glass in order to enjoy the full flavor and aroma.

The brewing process is essentially the same as home brewing, just on a much larger scale, says Kathy. Instead of buying a pre-built brewing system for the Imp, Matt built one by acquiring pieces from different places. Building the brewing system themselves allowed better understanding of the process and how the machines work. Matt and Kathy are the only two employees of the brewery and are responsible for everything. They work together to find suppliers for ingredients and brew, bottle and distribute the beer, while keeping up with the business aspects of the brewery including financials, marketing and merchandising. Kathy's title is "Brewmaster's Master," while Matt is the "Brewmaster."

Although they opened the brewery during a recession, their passion has helped them succeed. The biggest challenge so far has been forecasting demand. It takes about one month to go from brew day to sell day and supplies, such as grain and yeast, need to be ordered up to one month before brew days. With little sales history it is sometimes difficult to forecast demand two months ahead, but the brewery seems to be doing it well. Their product is sold mainly at specialty beer stores and bars in the Cleveland area, but sales have reached as far as Columbus. The Imp Store, which is open every Friday, sells six-packs, T-shirts and other Imp merchandise.

As for future plans, Indigo Imp plans to keep making great beer. During the summer of 2009, the brewery released a small batch sample pack containing three new



*Kathy, Bowling Green State, and Matt Chappel opened Indigo Imp Brewery in downtown Cleveland more than two years ago and have continued growing.*



*The mash tun, an important part of brewing, mixes grain and water.*

beers and it sold out within a month. They plan to release more small batch sample packs to introduce new Imp styles.

Another thing that sets Indigo Imp apart is their unique packaging. One bottle in every six-pack is sealed with wax. "It's just a fun thing that helps set us apart," Kathy said. "But it does take longer at the end of the production line to dip one bottle into wax. They're all hand-dipped. It's really eye-catching. When you see it on the shelf, you know it right away."

Kathy's favorite part of working at the brewery is pouring the grain into the mash tun. "Every beer has a different grain bill [ingredients used during brewing] developed by the Brewmaster so it is a treat for me to experience different smells. Then,

after the final product is done and the beer is carbonated in bottles, I can taste the different grains that I smelled while mixing in the mash tun," she says.

Indigo Imp's flagship beer is Blonde Bombshell, an American blonde ale. The brewery also offers Jester, a pale ale made with Belgian yeast, and Gatekeeper, a classic Robust Porter, year round. Winter Solstice, a deep amber, full-bodied ale, makes a seasonal appearance.

In addition to the brewery, Kathy works full time for Eaton Corporation as an IT Enterprise Architect. She started working for Eaton in October 1994 after graduating from Bowling Green State with a BSBA specializing in Management Information Systems and has alternated between several

roles within IT. "Scheduling is key," Kathy says. She has to carefully manage her schedule so that she can work in brewery work around her full-time job as well as family obligations.

Kathy believes Deltasig taught her how to work together when opinions are varied and how to market to desired demographics. "It was a terrific experience," she said. Her advice for other Deltasigs wanting to start their own business is to "go for it!" Owning your own business has as many challenges as working for another company, but they are different. "It takes lots of dedication and hard work and you must be passionate about your business, but it is worth it." ▲

## Follow the Imp

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## Where did Indigo Imp's name come from?

An Imp is a minor demon, so Indigo Imp is a little blue devil. Matt and Kathy both graduated from the same high school in Cleveland, where the blue devil was the mascot. They chose the name of the brewery from a twist on their high school mascot.