



# Barrel Republic gives freedom to pour

By Allison Keltner 2:16 P.M.MAY 19, 2016



Barrel Republic — *Courtesy photo*

For many, it's a familiar feeling: You want to try a new beer and order a pint. The bartender sets the glass in front of you, you take a sip, and... it's not quite what you expected or were hoping for. Not wanting the beer to go to waste, you reluctantly finish it, eyeing your friend's IPA wistfully.

At Barrel Republic, that disappointment and regret doesn't have to happen. Instead, customers are given the "freedom to pour" with an RFID bracelet that they scan at each tap before pouring themselves a taster or pint. "I was inspired to find a better way to try different craft beers without having to order a pint at a time," said Barrel Republic owner, Dave Pike. "There's often a delay in getting the bartender's attention when you're standing four rows back, waiting for the one person who's serving the beer. The freedom to pour concept proves to be a more affordable and fun way to try different beers."

Once customers get their wristband, they're free to peruse the taps — a screen above each tap has info about the beer (brewery, where it's from, type of beer, ABV) — grab a glass, and pour to their heart's content (or until they max out their wristband). A staff of certified

Cicerones is on hand to help customers make informed choices about what they're drinking, but the point is to try a wider variety of beer than is possible in most other beer bars.

The unexpected aspect of Barrel Republic's concept is that customers are encouraged to move around and socialize more. Instead of waiting for a bartender to pour and bring your beer to you, you can "get up off the bar stools," as Pike said. It's easy to ask for fellow beer lovers' opinions on what you should drink next.

The original Barrel Republic location opened in Pacific Beach in 2013 with 44 taps. Last year, a second location opened in Oceanside, with a full kitchen serving upscale pub fare like smoked tomato and jalapeno mac 'n' cheese, mini crabcake bites, kale and vegan ricotta flatbread and California cuban sandwiches. Oh, and bacon popcorn! Everything is cooked and served fresh; Pike mentioned that they don't even have a freezer in the kitchen. Both locations feature rotating taps and a mix of local beers and selections from around the country.

Next, Pike and his team are working on a third Barrel Republic location in Carlsbad Village, which will have an outdoor beer garden. Their chef at the Oceanside location, Michael Brown, is creating the Carlsbad menu following the same philosophy of fresh ingredients and elevated comfort food.

Barrel Republic, 1261 Garnet Ave., Pacific Beach or 215 N Coast Highway, Oceanside. [barrelrepublic.com](http://barrelrepublic.com)