



Greg Koch, CEO and Co-founder.

Is your store worthy of **Stone Enjoy By IPA** from Stone Brewing Company?

BY MICHAEL KUDERKA

It's no secret that beer SKUs are at an all time high and shelf, tap and floor space are all at a premium. So, deciding which brands to stock and knowing which breweries can be counted on to produce new products that will move is an increasing challenge. What's needed is product excitement, very much what **Stone Enjoy By IPA** is generating with consumers. Stone has raised the bar for what it means to be a retail partner.

By flexing the company's well developed social media muscles, and pairing it with an unprecedented commitment to beer freshness, Stone Brewing Co. invokes the ultimate consumer response. **Stone Enjoy By 09.21.12 IPA** sold out in its first geographic target markets of Southern California, Chicago and New Jersey, in some cases before the beer even hit the shelves.

The retail buzz

"I thought it was a gimmick at first," said one New Jersey retailer. "I thought Stone had messed up a batch and they were trying to sell it fast. But our distributor let us know that it was actually an extremely fresh double IPA released in both bottles and kegs and that it would sell fast. Plus, anything remaining on 9.22.12 they would take back."

The reality, explained another New Jersey retailer, "We never even put a bottle out on the floor and the three cases we received were gone. Our beer customers were calling and asking us to hold a bottle aside and we had to say 'no'. Just to be fair to everyone, we only sold the beer one bottle at a time, and only to customers that were in the store."

"Brewed to not last"

"The way the industry works, seasonals like pumpkin beers are brewed in July or August and retailers hope they are sold out by the end of October," explained Greg Koch, Stone Brewing Co. CEO and Co-founder. Greg continued, "At Stone, we take freshness seriously. So much so that we don't create a special 'code' to communicate the expiration date, we actually laser-

etch the 'Enjoy By' date in big numbers on each bottle."

The "Enjoy By" date printed on each bottle is reflective of a 35-day package-to-drink cycle. To fully maximize the beer's fresh hop flavor, it must be consumed before or by the end of the 35-day cycle.

Greg detailed that for the promotion to work, it requires a commitment from the brewery, the distributor, the retailer and the consumer. Stone Brewing Co. ships the beer to their local distributors who immediately delivers the beer within seven-days to retail, and retailers cannot sit on or ration the brand. The distribution is intended to not load up any one retailer with multiple cases, but instead to spread availability on the thinner side.

Stone also alerts consumers about **Stone Enjoy By IPA** releases and provides an interactive map at www.stonebrewing.com/enjoyby/ so anyone can find exactly which retailers, restaurants and bars are carrying this beer. Visitors can even vote for the next market of **Stone Enjoy By IPA** distribution.

Concludes Koch, "Our goal is to continually up our game for the benefit of our wholesalers, retailers, and Stone fans. Fresh beer is a growing favorite for consumers. Fresh beer is better for retailers, as consumers will have better experiences with the beer they purchase. Fresh beer is better for wholesalers, as it improves the quality of business that a retailer is able to conduct. Fresh beer is better for brewers as it generally represents their beers better. Of course, there are some specific styles of beer that are "cellarable," but those styles are a different discussion."

Who's next on the list?

As a retailer, you have to have this beer for your store because it isn't often that a brewer creates this kind of buzz. For stores in the next worthy states of Colorado and Ohio, the release will be labeled as **Stone Enjoy By 11.09.12 IPA**, and there is much more freshness to come.

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