

Jim Koch

Brewer and Founder of The Boston Beer Company

Did you know that Jim Koch, founder of The Boston Beer Company and brewer of Samuel Adams, travels to Bavaria each year to hand select the finest Noble hops for his brews? And that he tastes every batch of beer bottled? Jim's passion for brewing quality, full-flavored beer and the desire to follow a family tradition led him to become the successful brewer that he is today. Making great beer is more than just his livelihood, beer is in his blood...in his briefcase...and more often than not, in his pocket.

Jim was born into an American family originally from Germany, with deep roots in brewing beer- first in Germany and then in St. Louis. For five generations, the men in the Koch family became brewmasters. At the time when Jim was looking to follow his passion, the brewing business was bleak. Small local breweries had closed all over the country and the industry's mega-breweries were selling mass-produced, lighter beer. Jim's father reluctantly retired from the beer business, and Jim went on to Harvard.

After graduating from Harvard, Jim took a hiatus from his graduate studies and followed his love of the great outdoors. He took a position teaching adventure skills for Outward Bound. For three years, he coached climbers into independence, urging them to muster the courage to face new challenges. Jim eventually returned to Harvard earning advanced degrees in both business and law, and on his second exit as a management consultant, he counseled the leaders of client corporations at the Boston Consulting Group. For six years, CEOs learned from Jim, and he learned from them.

Those learnings and his entrepreneurial spirit led Jim to the life-altering decision to start a business of his own. Convinced that he could find his niche in the competitive beer market, Jim followed family tradition and became a brewer. "My father thought I was crazy when I told him I wanted to start a brewery. 'We've spent 20 years trying to get the smell of a brewery out of our clothes,' Charles Koch said. I believed that it wasn't in the clothes, it was in the blood. My dad shook his head, but at some level, he must have liked the idea, because he became my first investor," Jim recalled. He also received from his dad the cornerstone of The Boston Beer Company: his great-great grandfather's recipe for Louis Koch Lager.

With a determination to hand craft beer with a constant eye on quality and taste, Jim made his first batch of beer in his kitchen following the old brewing techniques. He insisted then, as he does now, that only the world's finest all-natural ingredients will make the best beer, and that quality and flavor are the only standards worth pursuing. Jim wanted a beer brewed with American craftsmanship and pride. The recipe on that yellowed piece of paper from his father's attic became known as Samuel Adams Boston Lager.

With a few bottles of beer, Jim made brewing a person-to-person business. When local distributors declined to carry the brew, he carried chilled bottles of his beer to bartenders around Boston and explained his idea. They thought the beer was unlike any other they'd tasted. They admired Jim for brewing the beer in small batches and keeping an obsessive eye on quality and flavor, rather than trying to compete with the larger brewers producing mass-quantity beer. They

also thought naming the beer after Samuel Adams, a revolutionary thinker who fought for independence, made sense.

Needless to say, the beer caught on, and Jim built the business outward from his first accounts in Boston. Six weeks after the introduction, Samuel Adams Boston Lager was picked as “The Best Beer in America” at The Great American Beer Festival in the Consumer Preference Poll. Samuel Adams has won more awards in international beer tasting competitions in the last 20 years than any other brewery in the world.

Today, Jim’s passion to produce high-quality, flavorful beer continues. Jim still makes decisions based on quality and taste, not on costs. All eighteen distinctive styles of Samuel Adams beer are brewed with the same care and passion that was used when Jim brewed his first batch of Samuel Adams Boston Lager in his kitchen. Jim and the other brewers also enjoy challenging themselves to create brews that excite beer drinkers’ palates and push the boundaries in brewing.

As Jim looks back at the beginning of Samuel Adams, “making Samuel Adams Boston Lager and serving it to the most discriminating beer drinkers around the world is still the most compelling challenge I can imagine,” he reflects. “And, making it happen is the most fun you can have and still be working.”