

# GOIN' NUTS!

Mississippi's  
first microbrewery  
produces the world's  
first pecan beer  
worthy of a toast

BY JENNY ADAMS

**P**ULLING UP A BAR STOOL NEXT TO LESLIE HENDERSON, I ask the former chemical engineer how a female goes into such a male-dominated industry. And how does one go from an engineering degree to co-owning, operating and acting as brew master to Mississippi's first and only Microbrewery? "What I do everyday at the brewery really utilizes my engineering degree," Leslie explained. "Once I started, I realized—I was born to brew beer. This is my calling."

I took a pull off my glass of Southern Pecan, swallowed, and held it up to the light. A rich russet color, a perfect sweet hint-of-pecan taste—this stuff is good.

Leslie and her husband Mark moved to Kiln, Mississippi, in 2000. Working in their respective engineering fields, the couple's experience with beer was that of most people. They knew how to drink it. But, opting for a creative Christmas gift one year, Leslie stuck a home brewing kit under the tree for Mark, and put to use, the little kit planted a seed. And the Hendersons had thirsty neighbors.

"We were brewing twice every weekend, and giving away almost everything to friends," Leslie says. As their house filled with five-gallon jugs and copper heat

128 | MAY/JUNE 2008



exchangers, the Hendersons began studying the market for a brewery. In 2003, Leslie headed off to the American Brewers Guild Brewing School, and followed that with an apprenticeship at the Crescent City Brewhouse in 2004. Mark, meanwhile, worked on a business plan—financing, logos, securing a location and equipment—while maintaining his full-time job as an electrical engineer. In January of 2005, they brewed the first batch of beer in the 5000-square-foot Lazy Magnolia facility.

"Blue Heron was our first. We made it thinking it would be terrible, and we would just throw it away," Leslie admits. "But, it

was so good, we sold it." Named for the birds the couple loved watching from their home, Blue Heron is just one of 12 beers brewed at Lazy Magnolia today. Seasonal choices and region-specific beers also dot the list, including Reb Ale, a wheat pale ale only available in Oxford, and Southern Gold, a honey beer only available in Hattiesburg. The honey used is collected from bees just 15 miles north of the city.

"Here in the South, we are spread out so far that it makes it difficult for a town to support a brewery," Mark says. "We enable that by creating a beer that is brewed in the South, that is in tune to Southern tastes, and