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Food

BEER HERE!



Euclid Hall's Jules Bouchard, left, and Jorel Pierce discuss the restaurant's fanciful beer pairings. *Cyrus McCrimmon, The Denver Post*

Crafting a fine beer menu

Chefs give serious attention to brews and food

By Eric Gorski *The Denver Post*



Tank 7 Farmhouse Ale from Boulevard Brewing pairs with the Chips and Dip duck appetizer at Euclid Hall. See more innovative beer and food pairings, page 3C. *Cyrus McCrimmon, The Denver Post*

On any given day this week in one of Denver's better restaurants, you may stumble into the knowledge that tangerine and hop-flavored cotton candy pairs nicely with an imperial India Pale Ale.

Or that Kolsch is a beer style that could break someone of a Bud habit, and it complements seafood. Or that no matter what you are eating, when given the opportunity to drink an Avery Brewing Oud Floris sour ale aged for a year in the cellar, you should take it.

This is Great American Beer Festival week in Denver, and there's no need to settle for greasy pub grub when raising your tulip glass.

More fine restaurants are taking beer seriously, a reflection of the growth of craft beer, a bounty of brews that pair beautifully with food and collaborations between like-minded creative chefs and brewers.

Many restaurants are staging elaborate beer dinners this week, seizing a moment when the beer world descends on the city for the sold-out fest that runs Thursday through Saturday.

Then there are those that regularly put as much care into their beer selection as they do their food.

Here are five:

PAIRING » 3C

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Inside: First Drafts beer column » 3C

BEER HERE!

PAIRING

◀FROM 1C

Euclid Hall

When a brewery representative arrives at Euclid Hall to negotiate the terms of a beer dinner, the conversation starts with the mundane details of pricing and delivery logistics. Then the fun begins.

Tell us your story, the brewers are urged. Why did you name your brewery that? How did you make that beer?

Take, for example, Epic Brewing's recent visit to the three-year-old restaurant and beer bar.

Utah-based Epic, a brewer of big beers that just opened an additional brewhouse in Denver, brought its Escape to Colorado IPA. Hops are added at three different points in the brewing process.

Listening closely was Jorel Pierce, Euclid Hall's chef de cuisine.

Pierce was thinking not of food that pairs with hoppy beer, but of a dish that would mimic how the hops were added.

So Pierce devised a dish adding a cucumber ingredient at three different points — a cucumber sauce, cucumber pasta and fresh cucumbers. It was one course in a just-concluded "Road to GABF" beer dinner series.

"I march to the beat of my own drum, I do whatever I want, and brewers are much the same way," Pierce said. "To take that relationship and paint it into a square or a mold, it takes all the person out of it."

Euclid Hall offers a modest 13 beers on tap and a deep bottle program.

Pierce said Euclid Hall has built enough trust with customers that it can put a pairing on the menu and confidently say, "You will like this."

Special events can veer into the carnival-esque. Euclid Hall is the venue for the aforementioned cotton candy and IPA pairing, part of a pre-25th anniversary celebration for Oregon's Deschutes Brewing at noon today.

"We make our own rules," said Jules Bouchard, who runs Euclid Hall's beer program. "But there are no rules."

1317 14th St., Denver, 303-595-4255; euclidhall.com

The Kitchen Denver

Behold, the Kitchen Kolsch. The house beer at the Kitchen's LoDo outpost is a creation of Prost Brewing, which brews German-style beers.

The Kitchen does not serve Bud or Coors, so it needed an approachable beer that is clean and not too hoppy, said Dennis Phelps, executive chef de cuisine.

"Then we use the opportunity to kindly educate them — 'Hey, this is a real-

EUCLID HALL

Dish: Chips and Dip (\$11.50, on page 1C). Duck with crisp Kennebec potato chips, lemon-scented goat cheese and fresh dill.

Beer: Boulevard Brewing's Tank 7 (\$5.25, 8 ounces). Bright, complex and balanced farmhouse ale from Kansas City, Mo.

"The tight bubble and playful brightness in the Tank 7 plays perfect counterpart to the duck's salty, smoky flavor. The fresh dill and creamy goat cheese highlight the beer's slightly funky farmhouse nature." — Jorel Pierce, chef de cuisine



FRUITION

Dish: Pan-Roasted Loch Etive Steelhead (\$28, above). Scottish trout with celery root crema, crispy quinoa, Granny Smith apple and fennel salad and a red grape verjus.

Beer: TRVE Brewing's Vexovoid (\$16, 750 milliliter bottle). Crisp, lively ale from Denver's heavy metal brewery on Broadway.

"I like pairing the delicacy of the beer and the delicacy of the fish. You get a lot of Champagne-like carbonation off the beer, you get tart apples, you get pears and peaches. The tartness of the beer and the grape sauce verjus is going to make this zing." — Eric Borg, beer program manager

ly cool brewery, just across the highway, and it's all local," he said.

The Kitchen beer menu goes much deeper, though. There are four regular beers on tap, four rotating taps and 61 bottles and cans — including 11 of "Kyla's Picks," favorites of beer director Kyla Ostler.

Newer to the menu are beers tucked away in The Kitchen's cellar — higher-alcohol offerings that evolve over time. This is where you will find Avery's Oud Floris (\$19 for a 12-ounce bottle).

The restaurant is just starting work with Fort Collins-based New Belgium Brewing to develop another house beer to coincide with the opening of the Kitchen's new location in Fort Collins next spring.

1530 16th St., Denver, 303-623-3127; thekitchendenver.com/the-kitchen-denver

Fruition Restaurant

Eric Borg has all of two

shelves of storage space in the tight quarters of Fruition in which to build a beer program.

So he chooses carefully and that means a rotating cast of seasonal beers that changes when the food menu does — quarterly.

The calendar just flipped to fall, which means German-style beers and The Bruery's Autumn Maple, brewed with yams. Come winter, belly-warmers. In spring, doppelbocks. And in summer, saisons.

"If you walk into a restaurant and have a really good list and beers you have never heard of," Borg said, "you are going to ask questions."

Like many beer geeks, Borg has embraced Italy, which is experiencing a craft beer renaissance.

Fruition is also partial to sour beers, whose lactic acid delivers a tartness that pairs well with food.

If you're new to sours, Borg suggests a small bottle of Duchesse de Bour-

gogne, a drinkable Flanders red ale.

1313 E. 6th Ave., Denver, 303-831-1962; fruitionrestaurant.com

Old Major

Diners at the carnivore emporium Old Major are presented with a beer menu on an iPad. The device allows for browsing of a selection striking a balance between approachable and challenging.

Kevin Deming took over the beer program in August from Ryan Conklin, a cicerone (beer sommelier) who dreamed up the original vision.

The list is heavy on old-world favorites to match the farmhouse cuisine — Belgians and saisons rule.

The idea is to "amplify the food," Deming said. At least one of the seven beers on draft is always a sour. Some prices are jarring, even to diners well-aware of the economics of the restaurant markup.

A trio of 750 milliliter

Beer pairings



Photos by Cyrus McCrimmon, The Denver Post

THE KITCHEN

Dish: Wisdom Farm Chicken (\$24, above). Grilled chicken with harissa sauce, cumin yogurt, cucumber, served on couscous.

Beer: Trinity Brewing's Elektrick Cukumbahh (\$26, 750 milliliter bottle). Saison from the Colorado Springs experimenters brewed with 24 pounds of English cucumber per barrel and lemon zest.

"It's a fun dish for this beer. Obviously, the cucumber is a natural. But also, the flavor of the grill with the chicken goes well with the rustic nature of this beer. And the herbs from the mint and the parsley goes great with saisons." — Dennis Phelps, executive chef de cuisine

LINGER

Dish: Pork Rellu Rin with grilled pineapple jam, sambal, plum sauce and scallions (\$4.50 each).

Beer: Great Divide Brewing Hercules Double IPA (\$9, 10 ounces). Hop monster from the beloved Denver brewery.

"Hercules has some great big notes of citrus, spice, fermented pineapple and yeast, which beautifully complements the pork braise and the roasted pineapple jam. The steamed bun itself plays off the yeasty finish of the hefty hop nuances from such a well-executed IPA." — Daniel Asher, operations chef and culinary director

OLD MAJOR

Dish: Whole-roasted chicken dirty rice, succotash, chicken jus (\$26).

Beer: Brewery Ommegang's Hennepin Farmhouse Saison (\$6 for 8 ounces). Hoppy and crisp golden ale from Cooperstown, N.Y.

"With a saison, you get citrus and pepper qualities with the yeast. Pairing it with the chicken, you really have complementary flavors." — Kevin Deming, head of the beer program

bottles from The Bruery, an Orange County, Calif., boutique brewery, tip the scales at \$49 to \$54.

Still, Deming said other patrons will not hesitate to drop \$27 on a 12-ounce Russian River Brewing sour to go with the nose-to-tail plate and foie.

"It's a perception thing," Deming said. "People will come in and order a bottle of wine for \$30 or \$200 without thinking much, but if you suggest a \$20 or \$50 bottle of beer, some guests will find that almost laughable."

3316 Tejon St., Denver, 720-420-0622; oldmajor-denver.com

Linger

The weekends are crazy at Linger, which dishes out small plates with an international flair in a former mortuary in Denver's Lower Highlands.

Beer manager Kade Gianetti knows he needs mass appeal, but he won't cede ground to the macros. You

will find gateway craft beers like Prost's Dunkel and a Tivoli Brewing lager.

Gianetti, a homebrewer, has only nine taps to work with. So he also has cultivated a roster of high-quality canned beers, which fits with the restaurant's sustainability efforts.

Linger's sister restaurant, Root Down, will host an unconventional five-course dinner tonight with whiskey distiller Leopold Brothers and New Belgium.

"What is really cool about beer pairings is it's really up in the air, whatever you can pull together," Gianetti said.

On Sunday, Linger will host an Oskar Blues hangover breakfast that will raise money for Colorado flood relief.

2030 W. 30th Ave., Denver, 303-993-3120; linger-denver.com

Eric Gorski: 303-954-1971, egorski@denverpost.com or twitter.com/egorski