 Crafting a fine beer menu

Chefs give serious attention to brews and food

By Eric Gorski 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 beers 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**

*from 1C*

**Euclid Hall**

When a brewery representative arrived at Euclid Hall to negotiate the terms of a beer dinner, the conversation was swirled with mundane details of pricing and delivery logistics. Then the fun began.

Tell us your story, the brewer said, with a wink. Why did you name your brewery that way? How did you make that connection?

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 brewpub in Denver, brought its Escalade to Colorado IIPA. Hops are added at three different points in the brewing process.

Listening closely was Joel Pierce, Euclid Hall’s chef de cuisine.

Pierce was thinking of food that pairs well 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 paste and fresh cucumbers. It was one course in a just-concluded “Road to GABF” beer dinner series.

“I’m a child of the sixties,” Pierce said. “I do what I want, and brewers are much the same.”

“I like that relationship and pair it into a square or a mold. It takes all the hop 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 pair on the menu and confidently say, “You will like this.”

Special events can veer into the carnivorous-queasy. Euclid Hall is the venue for the aforementioned cotton candy and IPA pairing, part of a pre-Oct. anniversary celebration for Oregon’s Deschutes Brewing at 11 a.m. today.

“We make our own rules,” said Joel Breisch, who runs Euclid Hall’s beer program. “But there are no rules.”

**The Kitchen Denver**

Beheld, the Kitchen Denver.

The drinker at the Kitchen’s LoDo outpost is a creation of Past Bistro, owner of the original German-style beers.

The Kitchen does serve local beers, and the newer addition of more American-style beers is becoming the sensation.

“Now we have a lot of people coming in and saying, ‘We love this!”

The kitchen is located at 1350 Blake St., Denver, 303-832-0820, thekitchen denver.com, thekitchen denver.

**Fruition Restaurant**

Eric Bong has all of two bottles of space in storage along the high-tops, 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 six bottles and cans — including a “Kyla’s Pick,” favorite of the Bong director.

Newer to the menu are the beers tapped in The Kitchen’s cellar — higher-alcohol offerings that evolve over time. This is where you will find Avery’s Otelis (try it for a taste) and a 13 oz bottle.

The restaurant is just starting to酿 more beers 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.

“The idea is to be a craft beer重新定义,” Bong said. “But it’s also to give back to the community.”

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

If you’re new to sour, Bong suggests a small bottle of Duchesse de Bourgogne, a drinkable Flaners red ale.

**Old Major**

Diners at the carnosaur 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 Coad, a connoisseur who dreamed up the original food program.

It’s heavy on old-world flavors and matches the housemade sides and sauces.

“The list is heavy on old-world favorites to match the housemade sides and sauces,” Deming said. “We’re trying to keep it as simple as the food.”

At least one of the seven bars on draft is always a sour. Some prices are jaw-dropping.

On Sunday, Old Major will host an Oktoberfest hangover breakfast that will raise money for Colorado Food relief.

**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 Glenn knows he needs mass appeal, but he won’t code ground to the macros. You will find gateway craft beers like Odell’s Dandelion and a Tivoli Brewing lager.

Gianetti, a house favorite, 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 whis- key distiller Leopold Brothers and New Belgium.**

“Whatever is real cool about beer pairings is it’s really up in the air. Whatever you can pull together,” Gianetti said.

On Friday, Linger will host an Oktoberfest hangover breakfast that will raise money for Colorado Food relief.

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