

## Like wine, the right beer can complement any meal

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This month, my wine column switches gears from wine to beer. With St. Patrick's Day right around the corner, many of us become a wee bit Irish and celebrate the occasion with a pint or two.

Beer and wine share many similarities. Both were made and refined by monks. Also, both are influenced by the fermentation process. Wine can be broadly segregated by white and red; beer is divided between ales and lagers.

The type of yeast selected and the temperature of the brewing process determine if the brew will become an ale or a lager.

Ales are brewed with top fermenting yeast (yeast remains at the top of the barrel during fermentation) at approximately 70 degrees, resulting in a more fruity taste. Examples of ales include porters, stouts, wheat beers and pale ales. These are best served at 45 to 50 degrees.



Lagers are brewed at a colder temperature of 50 to 55 degrees with bottom fermenting yeast, which produces a more round, clean and crisp beverage. Examples of lagers include pilsners, bocks and Oktoberfest beers. These are best served at a cooler 35 to 45 degrees.

The Irish typically prefer beer served at a warmer temperature. Cold beer in a warm stomach releases more carbonation, creating an uncomfortable bloated feeling.

To evaluate a beer, it is best to smell the aroma while the head is present. A head that quickly disappears suggests a lower malt level and excessive carbonation. A quality beer has flavors of hops and barley-malt. Evaluate a beer like you would a wine - should swish the beer in your mouth to determine its balance, sweetness level, body and finish (aftertaste). Good beer begins with an aromatic hoppiness, offers flavor (like malty sweetness) and has a long aftertaste.

### Food pairings

Given its international popularity, beer plays a significant role in meals, social outings and celebrations around the world. Around St. Patrick's Day, every tavern becomes Irish. They offer beers with Irish inspired dishes, including the traditional corned beef and cabbage. With this fare, a good match is an Irish ale such as Bass Pale Ale, Goose Island Red Ale, Caffrey's Irish Ale or Sierra Nevada Pale Ale. Though the Irish may protest, Germany is synonymous with beer, with approximately 1,200 breweries and a per capita consumption of 39 gallons. Germany's annual three-week Oktoberfest celebration in Munich centers on beer. In our area, Oktoberfest celebrations offer a good opportunity to experience quality beers from local microbreweries.

Other cultures also feature beer with their everyday cuisine. As an example, at Kiku's Japanese Steakhouse in Naperville, the proprietor Steve Shorin pairs full-bodied Sapporo Beer with teriyaki-glazed chicken skewers (Yaki Tori) and also recommends Kobe beef barbecue - a wonderful combination!

As with wine, beer can be paired with food. Ales are best with red meat and lagers work well with white meat. A beer's hoppiness level is similar to wine's acidity level. A higher level (within balance) tends to be more food friendly. Local microbreweries and imports tend to have more hops in their product than America's national brands.

More intense hoppy flavor profiles range from Guinness' rich creamy texture with a roasted flavor (and surprisingly has fewer calories per ounce than skim milk) to Bass Ale's smooth notes with a bitter aftertaste to Sierra Nevada's malty profile to Harp's strong but not overpowering beer flavor (ideal summer beer as it is best served chilled).

Most popular pubs offer 10 to 15 draft beers to choose from, so exploring new flavors is readily available. Next time, try matching a recommended pairing of an ale or lager with your meal, to see how they complement each other.

As Quigley's Irish Pub reminds us, a great Irish pub offers fun, good conversation, good music and food and great people. Sounds like a great recipe for a perfect pairing. Happy St. Pat's Day!

## **Beer Basics**

### **Match Game**

Matching a beer type with the various dishes or courses, the following generalizations apply:

Ales: Salads, corned beef, beef, lamb and dessert

Lagers: Pizza, fish and German sausages

### **Bill's Picks**

Two Brother's: Domaine DuPage Ale

Walter Payton's: Payton Pilsner

Guinness: Extra Stout

Harp: Lager

Caffrey's: Irish Ale

Bass: Pale Ale

Sierra Nevada: Pale Ale

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