



GENEROUS FLAVOR:



*By Jim Vondracek,
with photography by Freddy Zavala*



Last May, I organized a beer and food pairing event that combined a joyful trifecta: homebrewing, having fun with friends, and doing good. It turned into a great evening, with six brewers, 55 attendees, a beautiful spring night in an urban courtyard, vibrant handmade beers, interesting pairings, and delightful conversation. And we raised funds to support a cause I believe in.

It all started with my desire to do a fundraising event for the Peace Camp, an interfaith effort that my wife, the pastor at Augustana Lutheran Church of Hyde Park, helped launch last year. Peace Camp is a three-night, multigenerational event with food, art, guest speakers, and discussions that end with s'mores around a campfire.

If you organize an event as a fundraiser, you have to be excited about the cause: your excitement will attract others and feed their involvement and investment. I had three goals for this event: raise funds for the Peace Camp, introduce newcomers to the wonderful world of fine beer and food pairing, and enjoy a fun, low-key evening with a good mix of program and conversation.

PAIRING FOOD AND HOMEBREW FOR A GOOD CAUSE



MELISSA AND PATTY'S SAISON SAISON

Contributed by **Patty McGuire Cook**
and **Melissa Edwards Hiller**

Batch volume: 10 US gal. (37.9 L)
Original gravity: 1.060 (14.7°P)
Final gravity: 1.008 (2.1°P)
Color: 7 SRM
Bitterness: 30 IBU
Alcohol: 6.9% by volume

YEAST
4 packs Wyeast 3711 French Saison

ADDITIONAL ITEMS
1 tube White Labs WLN4000 Clarity Ferm, added to primary

MALTS AND SUGARS

21 lb. (9.53 kg) Belgian Pilsner malt
1.5 lb. (680 g) torrified wheat
1.5 lb. (680 g) light Munich malt
2 lb. (907 g) table sugar (sucrose), added to boil

HOPS

3.4 oz. (96 g) Hallertau 4% a.a. @ 60 min
1.5 oz. (43 g) Hallertau 4% aa @ 0 min (steep 5 minutes)

WATER

Ca 42 ppm, Mg 14 ppm, Na 13 ppm, SO₄ 10 ppm, Cl 18 ppm, HCO₃ 129 ppm.

BREWING NOTES

Mash 90 minutes at 147°F (63.9°C). Boil 90 minutes. Ferment 21 days at 65°F (18.3°C).

EXTRACT VERSION

Substitute 11 lb. (5 kg) extra light dry malt extract, 2 lb. (907 g) amber dry malt extract, and 2 lb. (907 g) wheat dry malt extract for the Belgian Pilsner malt, torrified wheat, and light Munich malt. Dissolve malt extract in reverse osmosis water, top up to desired boil volume, and proceed with the boil.

Before each pairing, brewers introduced their beer and the paired dishes. Left: (left to right) Jim Todd, Bill Goetz, Tom Truffer, Patty McGuire Cook, Melissa Edwards Hiller, and Jim Vondracek; Top: Melissa Edwards Hiller and Patty McGuire Cook; Bottom: Jim Vondracek.

BASICS OF PAIRING

Enjoying beer with meals by thoughtfully pairing dishes with different beers adds another level of interest to our enjoyment of both the food and beer. While many people associate pairing food with wine, beer pairings offer a much wider range of sensory options for the creative host. The breadth of styles in beer, and their aromas and tastes, eclipse what is available in wine.

For example, a tart, fruity krieb has no equivalent in the wine world and can pair with fatty roast meats, cutting through the richness deliciously. And that old standby of pairings, wine and cheese, really doesn't work. Cheese coats your tongue and mutes your enjoyment of the wine. On the other hand, the effervescence of beer clears through that palate-clogging richness.

Pairings are all about combining flavors, aromas and textures in ways that please. Three concepts provide some guidance in thinking about pairings:

- **Complementary pairings:** aromas and flavors in beer and food are similar and work together to build upon each other.
- **Contrasting pairings:** the beer and food's aromas and flavors are different and provide a contrapuntal but harmonious mix.



Left and right: Bill Goetz and James Cook serve beers to attendees;
Bottom: a glass of saison paired with aged gouda and cucumber with pesto.



LUPULIN MADNESS AMERICAN IPA

Contributed by Jim Todd

Batch volume: 6 US gal. (22.7 L)
Original gravity: 1.067 (16.4°P)
Final gravity: 1.012 (3.1°P)
Color: 12 SRM
Bitterness: 75 IBU
Alcohol: 7% by volume

MALTS

13.5 lb. (6.12 kg) 2-row pale malt
0.75 lb. (340 g) dark Munich malt
0.38 lb. (172 g) Caramunich I malt
0.38 lb. (172 g) melanoidan malt
0.38 lb. (172 g) Special B malt
0.25 lb. (113 g) acidulated malt

HOPS

1 oz. (28 g) Columbus, 14% a.a., first wort hop
2.7 oz. (77 g) Simcoe, 12.9% aa, whirlpool 30 min
4 oz. (113 g) Amarillo 8.2% aa, whirlpool 30 min
4 oz. (113 g) Falconer's Flight, dry hop 3 days

WATER

Ca 51.2 ppm, Mg 7.7 ppm, Na 21.4 ppm, SO₄ 45.1 ppm, Cl 79.9 ppm, HCO₃ 54.8 ppm.

YEAST

2 packs Fermentis SafAle US-05

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

0.5 tablet Whirlfloc @ 5 min
1 tube White Labs WLN4000 Clarity Ferm, added to primary
10 drops Fermcap S, added to primary

BREWING NOTES

Mash 45 minutes at 149°F (65°C), then 60 minutes at 158°F (70°C). Boil 60 minutes. Ferment 14 days at 64°F (17.8°C).

EXTRACT VERSION

Substitute 15 lb. (6.8 kg) extra light dry malt extract and 2 lb. (907 g) amber dry malt extract for the 2-row, Munich malt, Caramunich malt, and acidulated malt. Steep melanoidin and Special B malts in 150°F (65.6°C) water for 30 minutes. Dissolve malt extract, top up to desired boil volume, and proceed with the boil.

- **Palate cleansing pairings:** some characteristic of a beer (e.g. bitterness, tartness, or carbonation) cuts through a dish's unctuous quality.

For more in-depth reading about pairings, look at Garrett Oliver's excellent book *The Brewmaster's Table. Tasting Beer* by Randy Mosher, *The Best of American Beer and Food* by Lucy Saunders, and *The Beer Pantry: Cooking at the Intersection of Craft Beer and Great Food* by Adam Dulye also offer thoughtful insights.

PAIRING WITH PURPOSE

I'd organized beer and food pairing events to support good causes twice before. The first time was for my oldest son's university campus ministry, with a gathering of about twenty-five in our home. A year or two later, I organized a pairing event as a part of the annual luncheon for a gardening not-for-profit that raised vegetables for local food pantries.

Because I wanted to feature homebrew, I first approached my homebrewing friends who I thought would be interested sharing their beers and asked if they'd be willing to help. When I had the five brewers lined up, we picked a date that worked for all of them.

We structured this as a donation event, so we didn't sell tickets. In Illinois, tickets for events featuring homebrewed beer can be sold if the purpose is charitable, but setting a ticket price can discourage guests from giving more than that ticket price, and I wanted people to think of this as a donation, not a ticket.

I set a suggested donation amount of \$35 per person and ended up with an average donation amount exceeding \$50. I made it possible for folks to contribute electronically, via PayPal or QuickPay, prior to the event, and guests also brought checks and cash the night of. Before the event, I emailed registrants an introduction to tasting beer that I had written for a largely non-beer-nerd audience. A few days later, I sent another piece, this one on the styles we would try at the event. (See HomebrewersAssociation.org/nd18 for the articles.)

THE PAIRINGS

Fifty-five guests attend our pairing event, which was held in Augustana's attractive courtyard in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood. As attendees arrived and signed in, we served a Czech pale lager available as a gathering beer. A large glass jar set prominently on the sign-in table encouraged folks to be generous, as did I on a couple of occasions during the evening.

Once everyone had assembled, I offered some brief remarks about tasting beer, beer and food pairing, and the Peace Camp we were raising funds for that evening. Then, I introduced the first brewer, who spoke about his beer's style, its characteristics, its history, and the brewing process. This was important because most attendees were not homebrewers, and many had only a cursory familiarity with craft beer styles.

While the brewer was speaking, a couple of volunteers and I brought out trays of the paired food, which we had plated earlier that afternoon. As the brewer spoke, other volunteers poured samples of the beer for everyone. After everyone had an opportunity to enjoy the pairing, I introduced the next brewer and we repeated the process.

We paired five styles of beer with five plates that night. Each plate, except the last, featured a cheese plus another item.

GERMAN PILSNER WITH BRIE AND PICO DE GALLO ON TORTILLA CHIPS

Bill Goetz, from the Brewers of South Suburbia (BOSS), brought his German Pilsner. Germany is the original home of the lager. In the 16th century, Bavarian authorities banned brewing during the summer months. Forced to produce their beers in the winter, brewers created an environment that fostered the evolution of lager yeast, which is suited to ferment in colder temperatures.

Bill's beer was crisp, clean, and refreshing, showing off both Pilsner malt and noble hops. We enjoyed this beer with mild brie (a soft cow's milk cheese) and tortilla chips with pico de gallo. The softness of the brie complemented the soft, round bread notes of the Pilsner malt, and the spicy pico de gallo emphasized the beer's refreshing bitter snap and effervescence.

CALIFORNIA COMMON WITH ANTIPASTO STICKS

My friend Tom Truffer has made the transition from homebrewer to professional and brought a California Common that he brewed with Half Day Brewery in Chicago's northwest suburbs. Half Day's version was rich, toasty, and full of caramel flavors with a spicy hop finish. We paired this beer with antipasto sticks—skewers of fresh mozzarella, cured salami, artichoke hearts, olives, and cherry tomatoes. The rich caramel of the beer provided a background for the bright, sharp antipasti, while the carbonation helped clear the palate between the bites of different flavor.

SAISON WITH AGED GOUDA AND CUCUMBER SLICES WITH PESTO

From CHAOS homebrew club, Melissa Edwards Hiller and Patty McGuire Cook brought their saison. It was dry, effervescent, and full of black pepper spice and lemon fruitiness.

Saison is great for pairing because it is so versatile. We paired this with an aged Gouda cheese, a traditional pairing for saisons. The creaminess and slight funk of the cheese melded nicely with the spicy



GREAT FEATS OF STRENGTH BARREL-AGED IMPERIAL STOUT

Contributed by **Jim Vondracek**

This beer won first place in the Wood Aged Beer Category at the 2017 Brixtoberfest competition. Three brewers combined a total of 15 gallons in a 15-gallon bourbon barrel and aged it for six months.

Batch volume:	10 US gal. (37.9 L)
Original gravity:	1.121 (28.3°P)
Final gravity:	1.026 (6.6°P)
Color:	55 SRM
Bitterness:	54 IBU
Alcohol:	13% by volume

MALTS

15 lb.	(6.80 kg) pale malt
5 lb.	(2.27 kg) Vienna malt
5 lb.	(2.27 kg) Munich malt 10°L
2 lb.	(907 g) chocolate malt 350°L
2 lb.	(907 g) roast barley 300°L
1.5 lb.	(680 g) caramel malt 75°L
1 lb.	(454 g) Briess Blackprinz malt
12 lb.	(5.44 kg) extra light dry malt extract, added to boil

HOPS

4 oz.	(113 g) Challenger, 6.8% a.a. @ 60 min
1 oz.	(28 g) Pacific Jade, 11% aa @ 60 min
4 oz.	(113 g) East Kent Goldings 5.6% aa @ 20 min

WATER

Ca 42 ppm, Mg 14 ppm, Na 13 ppm, SO₄ 10 ppm, Cl 18 ppm, HCO₃ 129 ppm.

YEAST

4 packs Fermentis SafAle US-05

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

1 Tbsp. (15 mL) Irish moss @ 10 min
1 tube White Labs WLN4000
Clarity Ferm, added to primary

BREWING NOTES

Mash 60 minutes at 156°F (68.9°C). Boil 60 minutes. Ferment 28 days at 65°F (18.3°C).

EXTRACT VERSION

Substitute 11 lb. (5 kg) extra light dry malt extract, 2 lb. (907 g) amber dry malt extract, and 2 lb. (907 g) wheat dry malt extract for the Belgian Pilsner malt, torrified wheat, and light Munich malt. Dissolve malt extract in reverse osmosis water, top up to desired boil volume, and proceed with the boil.

intensity of the beer. The second pairing was a cucumber slice with pesto, the herbs of which also complement saison's spicy, rustic nature.

AMERICAN IPA WITH AGED AMERICAN CHEDDAR AND PROSCIUTTO

For this pairing, we had two IPAs brewed by BOSS's Jim Todd and homebrewing friends Shelly and Chris Barnard. Jim's IPA was a great example of the style, with bracing bitterness and just enough malt to provide a canvas upon which to display the hops. The Barnards' IPA featured rye in the grist and had a delicious spicy quality.

For such a mouth-popping flavorful style, we paired a sturdy aged American cheddar—the beer and cheddar stood up to each other well. IPAs are also the perfect foil for fatty meats, such as the prosciutto we served. The combination of bitterness, malt, and effervescence cut right through the fat, making for a delicious combination.

BARREL-AGED IMPERIAL STOUT WITH STRAWBERRIES AND DARK CHOCOLATE

Our final pairing beer was a barrel-aged imperial stout I brewed as part of a group barrel project with my son Hugh, which won a gold medal at 2017's Brixtoberfest competition. A big, flavorful beer with a full body and notes of coffee, chocolate, and stone fruits, this beer was aged in a 15-gallon bourbon barrel for six months after fermentation and took on some of the barrel's characteristics of bourbon, oak, and vanilla.

The full-bodied, palate-busting flavors of this beer stand up well to funky flavors like blue cheese, but we decided to emphasize its dessert-like qualities and paired it with the sweet-tart flavors of strawberries and dark chocolate. The berries and chocolate complemented the stout's flavors and melded into a harmonious whole.

HOMEBREW, DO GOOD, AND HAVE FUN

Half of attendees were members of the Augustana community and half were not. A handful were homebrewing friends, but most learned about the event in other ways. It made for a great mix, and throughout the evening I made sure to introduce people to each other to foster conversation and community.

Sometimes I describe my homebrewing as "a hobby gone amuck" and there is some truth to that. But I love doing events like this—taking an aspect of that hobby, using that aspect to support an effort I care about,

and creating a fun evening of beer, food and community. In the end, sharing both my brewing avocation and those causes I care about adds depth and meaning to life. I hope you feel inspired to consider ways to use your homebrewing hobby to support those working to make a positive difference in our communities.

Jim Vondracek is a homebrewer in the Chicago area, a member of the BOSS and

CHAOS homebrew clubs, a BJCP National judge, and judging director at the Chicago Cup competition who writes a blog at singingboysbrewing.com and generally takes this whole homebrewing thing a little too seriously.

Freddy Zavala is an excellent homebrewer, a member of the CHAOS homebrew club, banker by day, and photographic artist by night.

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BRAVO™

Alpha-Acid %: 14 – 17
Beta-Acid %: 3 – 5
Total Oils (ml/100g): 1.6 – 2.4
Aroma: orange, fruity, vanilla, floral



X07270

Alpha-Acid %: 15 – 18.5
Beta-Acid %: 4 – 5.2
Total Oils (ml/100g): 3 – 4.4
Aroma: spicy, resinous, tangerine



EUREKA!™

Alpha-Acid %: 17 – 19.9
Beta-Acid %: 4.6 – 6
Total Oils (ml/100g): 2.5 – 4.4
Aroma: black currant, dark fruits, strong herbal notes, pine tree



CALYPSO™

Alpha-Acid %: 12 – 14
Beta-Acid %: 5 – 6
Total Oils (ml/100g): 1.6 – 2.5
Aroma: pear, tropical fruit, apple, mint

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