

The science behind beer and food pairings

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Beer isn't just for nuts and pretzels anymore. You can now find the perfect brew to accompany your favorite food, whether it's picnic fare or haute cuisine, according to one of the nation's top brewmasters.

There are even beers that pair well with desserts, says Keith Villa, founder and head brewmaster of Blue Moon Brewing Company, a division of MillerCoors. In a July 18 presentation at IFT16: Where Science Feeds Innovation, hosted by the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT), Villa offered insight into how to choose a [beer](#) to accompany different dishes on the menu.

For instance, a light lager or a bohemian pilsner pairs well with hot dogs and hamburgers, he says, and stouts brewed with dark chocolate complement barbecue, braised beef dishes as well as chocolate and vanilla desserts.

More people today are interested in beer pairings, which is finding the right beer to complement a dish, he says. "When I launched Blue Moon in 1995, beer and food pairings were an anomaly."

Back then, people talked about matching wines with different foods, but they rarely thought of beer in the same way, he says. Now, "the culinary area has completely evolved to having an acceptance of pairing beer with everything from greasy foods to fine cuisine."

He recommends pairing:

- Holiday beers, such as those brewed with cinnamon, with barbecue, French toast and vanilla and apple desserts.
- A Belgian white, which his company makes, with poultry, pork and seafood dishes and spicy meals like Buffalo-style chicken wings, Mexican food and Thai fare.
- Fruit beers, such as a Belgian-style raspberry brew, with game dishes and desserts.
- An amber ale or an Imperial Irish red ale

with steak. They can enhance the taste of a steak dinner because the carbonation and acidity of the beer cuts through the fat of the steak, allowing you to experience a lot of flavor on your palate, Villa says.

Despite the huge number of specialty beers on the market and the ability to pair them with different foods, the sales data show that a lot of people prefer to drink standard high-quality light beer, Villa says.

It'll soon be easier for consumers to know how many calories are in the brew they are having with their favorite meal.

Last week, the Beer Institute announced that participating brewers and importers will voluntarily list calories, carbohydrates, protein, fat and alcohol by volume on the labels of their beer products. This should help "consumers when they make decisions regarding the beer of their choice," says Joy Dubost, senior director of science and external affairs for the Beer Institute and another speaker at the meeting.

Companies have committed to providing this information on all of their product labels, packaging and websites by the end of 2020, but consumers can expect to see this information on some products already in the marketplace, she says.

Beer Institute member companies, including Anheuser-Busch, MillerCoors, HeinekenUSA, Constellation Brands Beer Division, North American Breweries and Craft Brew Alliance, have agreed to follow these standards. These companies together produce more than 81% of the volume of beer sold in the U.S, Dubost says.

Provided by Institute of Food Technologists

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