

Va. Couple Creates Book That Pairs Fine Beers With Food

DAVID A. MAURER, The Daily Progress

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. (AP) — The next time you have a frothy-headed glass of high-quality beer in your hand, you might consider offering a toast to a certain bill that was signed into law in October 1978.

The bill, H.R. 1337, legalized home brewing for personal or family use. This quickly led to a flood of books on how to brew beer, as well as a cottage industry to supply the fixings and equipment with which to do it.

When some amateur basement breweries started turning out beer worth paying for, steps were taken to allow people to do that. That advancement led to the repealing of laws prohibiting pubs from brewing beer on the premises.

California was the first to do this in 1982, and other states quickly followed. In 1984, Chesapeake Bay Brewing Company in Virginia Beach became the state's first modern-day microbrewery.

Today, there are more than 60 microbreweries operating in Virginia, and the number continues to grow. The small-batch breweries have become so popular that August was designated Virginia Craft Beer Month.

Perfectly timed to coincide with this monthlong celebration of the tasty vat variations being offered by brewers these days is the release of a new book on the subject of melding fine beers with good eats.

"The Foodie's Beer Book: The Art of Pairing and Cooking with Beer for Any Occasion" is the creation of Brooke and Luther Fedora, owners of Horse and Hound Gastropub on West Main Street in Charlottesville.

The couple will be giving a cooking class and signing copies of the book from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Sunday at the Happy Cook in Charlottesville. The shop is located in the Barracks Road Shopping Center.

The coffee-table-style book is replete with beautiful photographs, all of which were taken by Brooke Fedora. She learned much about the art form from her father, renowned outdoor photographer Jim Rowinski.

Husband and wife both contributed to the personable prose in the book, which describes beers and provides clear instructions for the recipes. Readers may feel as if a friendly chef is at their shoulders giving them tips as they prepare delicious main-course recipes and desserts.

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Published on Food Manufacturing (<http://www.foodmanufacturing.com>)

These chefs turned authors are two of the area's finest. Each is a graduate of the prestigious Culinary Institute of America, and prior to opening their Charlottesville restaurant in 2007, they plied their trade in upscale eateries in London and New York City.

Luther Fedora was recently voted "Best Chef" in Charlottesville and Albemarle County by the Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau. He is as familiar with fine wines as fine beers, each of which he said offer its own distinct experience.

"Wine is great, and I was a big wine guy," Luther Fedora said as he stood behind the bar, where he offers 13 different beers on tap and more than 30 other brands in the bottle. "At one time, I was the head sommelier for Marco Pierre White in London, and my whole job was pairing food with wine.

"Beer takes you in a different direction. Beer is complex and food is complex, so you want to think about weight with weight.

"For example, if it's summertime and you're making a light dish, serve a light beer. If it's cold and you want something big and heavy — like the Flemish carbonnade, which is a braised beef dish — couple it with a heavy beer."

Along with the creative recipes in the book are descriptions of beers from near and far that will best complement the dishes. Information about beers includes details such as color, complexity, flavor notes and even the proper glass in which to serve the brew.

Horse and Hound Gastropub has earned a reputation for being a family-friendly restaurant that offers simple and wholesome food prepared by world-class chefs. Its large selection of craft beers was one of the things that led to the creation of the book.

"The idea for the book came about because of Restaurant Week, which started here in Charlottesville a few years ago," Brooke Fedora said. "It's something that's done in many major cities, with restaurant offering special meals with special pricing.

"We were one of the first restaurants to jump on board with the idea, and we embraced it as something fun to do. We created our first beer-pairing menu for Restaurant Week in 2011, and did 15 entirely new dishes all paired and cooked with some of the greatest beers we could think of.

"People went crazy for the idea and thought it was so cool. We were getting telephone calls from people who had heard about it and wanted to drop by. We were so busy that week."

The novel idea was such a success that it was resurrected every Restaurant Week that followed. After plenty of positive feedback from customers, the Fedoras decided to share their knowledge and recipes with a wider audience by writing a book.

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The restaurateurs are constantly on the lookout for interesting and flavorful craft beers. And like wines, good beers can be expensive, such as a \$700 keg of craft beer that a distributor recently tried to sell them.

"My question to my beer distributors is, 'Who got it?' " Luther Fedora said. "If nobody got it, I'm in. If everybody got it, I don't want it.

"If I've never heard of it, that's better. If there's only one keg of it, even better. If I can't pronounce the name, better yet. Last night, I tried this beer that's a collaboration between New Belgium Brewery and Three Floyds Brewery.

"It's a gratzer ale. This style of beer hadn't been brewed for 100 years. It's interesting, different and really good."

The Fedoras' new book is divided into four sections, each representing a different season. In addition to recipes and pairings, it includes a brief history of beer, how it's made, a primer on beer types and tips on how to cook with it.

The book even includes definitions of beer descriptors such as "hoppy," which denotes a brew that's spicy, bitter or has tones of citrus. And now with brew masters bringing back old-style beers and experimenting with others to create flavors that will be distinctly their own, these are exciting times for beer lovers.

"I think what's so exciting about beer for us is the variety, and that people are being so creative with it," Brooke Fedora said. "As chefs, that makes it exciting to use it.

"It's still a really fresh market where people are enjoying the whole process of making beer, and having fun with it right down to creating the names and labels. Some of the best dishes we've made have come from picking a beer we've found really delicious and interesting, and then figuring out what foods we can put with it.

"It's made us more creative in the kitchen. This book really represents what we're doing in the restaurant."

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