

The Brewers Dinner at Peter B's Pub **By Kathy Chin Leong**

Do you crave a mid-week getaway from the kids? Consider Monterey. And begin that with dinner. A delightful surprise awaits at the Brewer's Dinner at Peter B's at the Portola Hotel and Spa every quarter. I know you can spend \$100 for a five-course meal, but here for \$70, not only do you get a five-course gourmet meal, you get a gourmet craft beer pairing with every dish.



For the price, you get an experience that is very, very special. First, you are sequestered in a separate area of the restaurant bordered by wine casks filled with the pub beer. Then, you also get to visit with the brewmaster of the restaurant, and in this case, it is Kevin Clark, the lead brewmaster who sits with you during the entire affair and explains the difference between a pale ale and a lager, and the precision it takes to brew this beer with hops and barleys from around the world. I learned that no question is too dumb or elementary.

Clark, a graduate of Cal State Monterey, knows all there is to know about these hoppy suds. He has perfected many varieties thus far during his five-year career here. We sat down and met Chef Jason Giles and lingered wistfully over an appetizer of Hudson valley foie gras, dressed in a circle topped with a basil leaf. This was paired with a Petra's Sour Pale Ale. Ahh, a perfect combination!

Next, the second dish was an unpretentious mozzarella salad with heirloom tomato slices. The housemade buffalo mozzarella was sliced into a light dream that paired excellently with the pesto sauce. This dish, joined at the hip with house favorite Belly Up Blonde Ale, was one of my favorites, for it went down smooth and seemed like it would match anything.

By Dish Number 3, I knew I had to put on the beer brakes, but my comrades, of which there were 13 others, we're just hitting their stride. The wait staff poured a full glass for each beer. Caution: be ready if you come for one of these beer or wine dinners, and only drink as much as you are able! The Full Metal Hops IPA, a fruity pineapple affair, sent us smiling with a hint of caramel at the back of the mouth.



Matched with pancetta wrapped prawns, the beer's brightest flavors broke through like the mid-morning sun breaking through a velvety fog. Right after this, Kevin snuck in a tequila beer presented in wine glasses. It was handsome and dark, but while others loved it, it was just too difficult for me. Couldn't knock it back. Not quite a wine, not quite the regular taste of beer... I am not a fan of fusion anything, and so no for me.

I marveled at Dish Number 4, where the Berkshire pork chop seemed to dance a jig with the Sum Of Hours seasonal Imperial Red Ale aged in whiskey barrels. The beer makers intentionally ferment certain beers in wine barrels, bourbon, and whiskey barrels to extract that flavor, integrating the taste into the beer. When I tried the Sum of Hours, I thought I was tasting a blend of whiskey and beer at their peak. It is truly evident. I am curious about the coffee flavored stout using shots of local ACME coffee that will be released in a few months.



Okay, in between great conversations and sips of ale, I couldn't finish all my beers. I was quite satisfied with the last dessert, a trio of peach, lime, and raspberry sorbets paired with Reef Points Hard Cider from a brewery in Paso Robles. With hints of zesty wild pear, this light colored drink was soothing as it equally balanced the lightness of the sorbets.

Sitting around this custom wood table held up with Jack Daniels' kegs, I marveled at the range of customers who were all locals. Retirees, a young military fellow with his wife, a few single men who frequent the pub restaurant, and ourselves. I was the only one from Silicon Valley. After all, this was a Monday night, so my husband and I opted to spend the night in town.



When all was said and done, and the last sip taken, the servers brought the dinner bills inside wine glasses, complimentary mementos of an evening well spent and scintillating conversation that lingered just as well as the hops on my tongue.

Details:
Portola Hotel and Spa
2 Portola Plaza
Monterey
831.649.4511
See www.portolahotelandspa.com

Peter B's Brewery
Dinner held once every quarter

Garage parking validated for three hours.
See www.portolahotel.com