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# How to drink beer

(As if we needed a lesson)

THE FLAVOURS AND COLOURS OF CRAFT BEER CAN BE AS COMPLEX AND REWARDING AS FINE WINE

Drinking beer is simple, it's something you do instinctively — gulp, swallow and repeat.

But how often do you slowly savour your chosen brew rather than simply guzzle it down? After a beer tasting session with Tina Wolfe, marketing manager for Wild Rose Brewery in Calgary, I discovered that drinking beer could be a chic affair rather than a "down the hatch" experience.

Wild Rose Brewery brews craft beers for savouring. With their "recycled-industrial" decor and the view of their copper-clad brew house, me and few other foodies from across Alberta had a session with Wolfe to discover how to truly appreciate beer.

"Tasting (beer) is multi sensory," explains Wolfe. "The best way to fully appreciate it is to take your time and notice all the subtleties of its appearance, aroma, and taste."

"Begin your experience by first observing the colour," suggest Wolfe. Color and clarity are the two first impressions, and both are dependent on the style of beer. The colour characteristic is mostly the function of the type of malt used during brewing.

Darker beers are often, though not always, stronger flavoured. Most beers are intended to be clear, but some wheat beers or unfiltered beers (Wild rose Velvet Fog) have cloudiness to them.



MADHU BADONI

FOOD

niments to spicy food, seafood, soft-ripened cheeses and lighter dishes. Beers with a fuller body are best paired with aged cheese, grilled meats and seafood, roasts, gratins, and smoked food.

When cooking with beer, the same rules apply: match the body and style of the beer to the body of the food you are cooking. It can enhance particular ingredients, help blend the flavours of the dish, or just add that little zing to your meal. Beer is a great ingredient for braising, steaming, marinating, and as a flavour component in soups and sauces.

If you do cook with beer, some suggest you serve the same beer as used in the recipe. Others like to use an "opposite" beer that will let you appreciate the taste of the one used in the dish.

My experience at Wild Rose Brewery left me intoxicated with beer tasting knowledge. They not only made me see their brew through different set of glasses but they succeeded in getting me into the spirits of cooking with beer!

## Some beer-related facts

- In the 1700s British troops living in India did not have access to good British ale and any attempts to ship the British ales to them resulted in spoilage. India Pale Ale, or IPA, was the solution. The generous amount of hops in this brew protected it from the heat and motion of the British sailing ships of the day.

- Beer is the second most popular beverage in the world, coming in behind tea.

- To get rid of the foam at the top of beer (the head), stick your finger in it.

- Tossing salted peanuts in a glass of beer makes the peanuts dance.

- Beer is a source of B-complex vitamins.

- In ancient times, monks who fasted or abstained from solid food subsisted on beer.

- Beer wasn't sold in bottles until 1850. Beer lovers would visit their local tavern with a special bucket, have it filled and then begin the merry journey home!

- It was customary in the 13th century to baptize children with beer.

- Beer was often served for breakfast in medieval England.

- Supposedly the oldest known written recipe is for beer.

- Foam is produced by a beer's CO2 and proteins from the barley, with hops, help to stabilize the head.

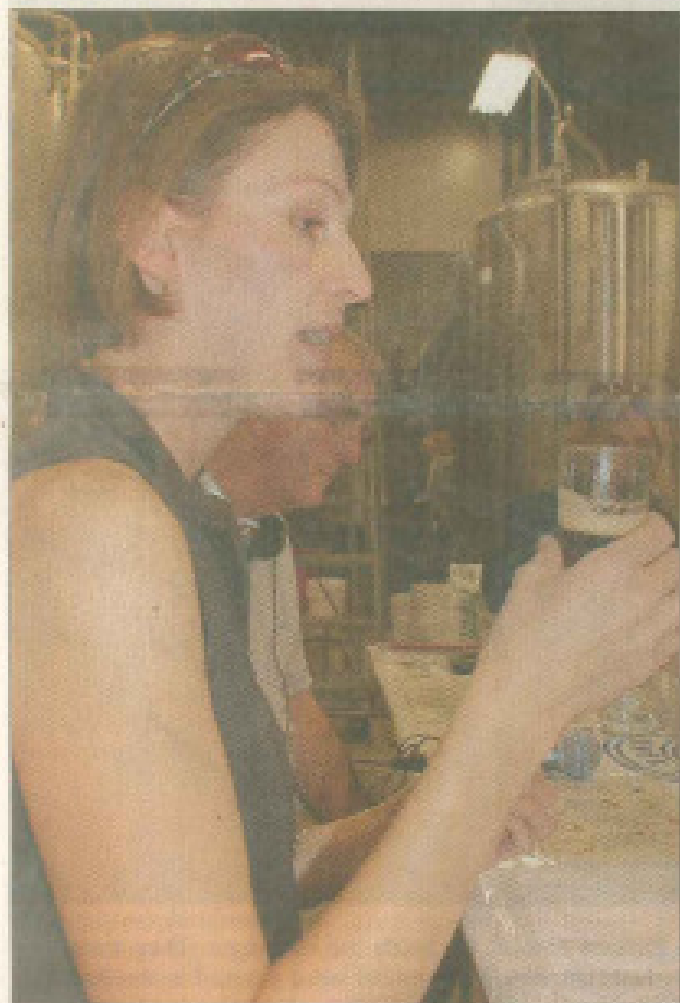
- A one- to two-finger-width of foam provides visual appeal and "seals" the beer, enhancing its aroma.

## Wild Rose Meaty Chili

Serves 8

- 3 medium yellow onions (diced)
- 4 tablespoons (50 mL) canola oil
- 6 tablespoons (75 mL) chili powder\* (mild, or to taste)
- 4 tablespoons (50 mL) coriander
- 2 ¼ tablespoons (30 mL) ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon (5 mL) garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon (2 mL) black pepper
- 1 teaspoon (5 mL) salt
- 1 bottle Wild Rose Velvet Fog (or a bottle of unfiltered wheat ale of your choice)
- 2 pound (1 kg) Alberta beef (cubed)
- 2 pound (1 kg) Alberta pork (cubed)
- 2 tablespoons (25 mL) Italian seasoning
- 2 cups (500 mL) crushed tomatoes (can)
- 2 cups (500 mL) thick tomato sauce

In a large pot, sauté onions in oil until translucent. Add spices (except Italian seasoning) and stir to coat onions. Stir in the beef and



Photos by ATUL BADONI

Tina Wolfe, marketing manager for Wild Rose Brewery in Calgary, explains the complexities of appreciating a good craft beer.



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Beer spans an endless array of hues and tones. The deep black colour and creamy tan head of the Alberta Crude Oatmeal Stout, golden hue of the SOB (Special Old Bitter), deep copper of a Pale Ale and distinctive red-amber hues of the Wheat Ale are all within the beer rainbow.

Flavour is largely influenced by the aroma of the beer. "To get the best whiff, swirl and sniff, moving the glass in circles releasing the aroma. It's easiest to describe what you're smelling by associating it with something you're familiar with such as baked biscuits, an espresso coffee or sweetness of caramel," explains Wolfe.

When you finally sip the beer, hold it in your mouth and swish it around your taste buds. Are the flavours in balance? Is the sweetness of the malt matched by bitterness from the hops? What taste sensations make up the flavour? Does the first impression change as you savour the beer, and does it leave a pleasant aftertaste or finish?

Note the lingering flavours after you swallow. Often it can be bitter from the hops or a lingering malty sweetness.

When pairing a beverage with food, one immediately thinks of wine. But according to Wolfe, there is a natural affinity between beer and food. Beer immediately conjures foods like pizza, chicken wings or nachos. But, there are many other choices than the obvious.

"If the pairings are done well, it's (food) going to enhance the flavour of the beer," says Wolfe.

Because of the vast varieties of beer, one can match the body and flavour of food with a companionable brew. Crisp, clean beers are great accompa-

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2 cups (500 mL) thick tomato sauce

In a large pot, sauté onions in oil until translucent. Add spices (except Italian seasoning) and stir to coat onions. Stir in the beef and pork and cook on medium heat until meat is browned on all sides. Deglaze pan with Velvet Fog.

You may want to open and enjoy the second bottle now (for quality control purposes, of course). Add Italian seasoning, tomatoes and tomato sauce and stir well. Reduce heat. Simmer for about one hour then check that meat is fully cooked through. Continue cooking until meat is tender. Season to taste.

Serve with your favourite hot sauces, corn bread and Wild Rose Velvet Fog.

### Wild Rose Alberta Crude Oatmeal Stout Baked Beans

1 kg small white

navy beans

20 oz Wild Rose Al-

berta Crude Oatmeal

Stout

(or substitute with

Wild Rose Brown Ale)

2 large cans tomato

sauce

1 large can stewed

tomatoes

¼ cup soy sauce

¼ cup Worcestershire

sauce

2 Tbs. grainy or

prepared mustard

or prepared molasses

1 small carton of black cooking

¼ cup jalapeno peppers

¼ cup barbecue sauce

2 Tbs. black pepper

Salt to taste

Rinse beans thoroughly and place in a large pot. Add salted water (until beans are covered) and add Alberta Crude Oatmeal Stout. Simmer and stir often. Remove from heat when beans are just soft and palatable. DO NOT overcook. Drain and set aside to cool. Combine next seven ingredients in a bowl. Add to cooled beans and mix evenly. Place beans in a baking dish. Bake in oven at 350 degrees for 15-20 minutes or until beans are tender and heated through. Mix in your favourite barbecue sauce. Season with salt and black pepper.

To find out more about the Wild Rose Brewery



Fresh salsa made in-house, chilled jalapeno cheddar dip and their brown beans baked with Alberta Crude Oatmeal Stout. Suggested beer pairing is Red Wheat Ale.

A great beer requires a proper glass. Hidden nuances become more pronounced, colours shimmer and the enjoyment of the beer simply becomes a better, more complete experience.

beer or if you are interested in attending their beer tasting session, check them out at [www.wildrosebrewery.com](http://www.wildrosebrewery.com) or visit their taproom in Calgary. Wild Rose Brewery Bldg. AF23, #2-4580 Quesnay Woods Dr. SW, Calgary, Alberta.

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