

BEER BUZZ:

A BREWING MIX UP

by Joey Williams

The “right way” to enjoy a beer is a topic that has sparked countless debates. From the “don’t fruit your beer” guy quoting decades old commercials, to the beer geek that swears by an unadulterated beer poured from the bottle into its proper logo emblazoned glassware, everyone has an opinion on how you should and should not consume your beverage of choice. Undoubtedly, many of these same people can give you countless reasons as to why you shouldn’t blend beers or use them in mixing. Never in my, admittedly short, time in the beer world has anyone shown me a document stating I can or cannot alter my beer for purposes of my own enjoyment. So, to all of the many reasons that we’ve all heard about why we shouldn’t mix our beers, I have one argument, it’s delicious.

Beers have been mixed and blended longer than anyone has had notions of how beer should and should not be enjoyed. In the 18th Century London it was fairly common practice for a customer to order a barkeep to blend two or more beers together to get a desired flavor. A particular blend, known as “three threads”, was especially popular with the working class of the day. These “porters” consumed so much of the beer, when a brewer finally created one beer to mimic the flavor of the blend, it became known as a Porter.

In the mid-19th century, a London bartender created the Black Velvet, a champagne glass filled half and half with Stout and Champagne, to memorialize the passing of Prince Albert. The drink was designed to resemble the dark colored armbands worn by the mourners.



In modern day, a resurgence of the art of crafting finely made cocktails has collided with the explosive growth of craft beer to create some of the most delicious libations you will ever enjoy. Bartenders everywhere are finding ways to work their favorite craft beers into creative mixtures. In doing a bit of research on the subject, I read a New York Times article where the who’s who of mixologists told some of their secrets for incorporating beer into cocktails. One of the drinks mentioned, the “Muddy Puddle”, included iced espresso, bourbon, peanuts and Sierra Nevada Stout.

If you’re looking to do some of your own mixing at home, here are some places to start. A standard blend of two beers, either layered or not, is something we’re all familiar with. A black and tan is a standard mix of an English pale ale and an Irish dry stout. In most cases the pale ale in question is Bass and the stout in question is Guinness. To make a black and tan, or any two part layered beer drink, pour the first beer, in this case Bass, fairly vigorously to create a thick foam. Place a broad spoon, like a soup spoon, upside down with the lip touching the glass and pour the second beer, Guinness, over the back slowly so that the beer is slowed by the spoon and “laid” on top of the other beer. Perfection isn’t always easily attainable, but something resembling a well-layered black and tan will still be just as enjoyable. Some other interesting two part beer blends that you should try are the Rogue Snickers Bar (½ Rogue Chocolate Stout and ½ Rogue Hazelnut Brown Nectar), the Chocolate Truffle (¾ Young’s Chocolate Stout and ¼ Lindemans Framboise) and the San Fran Black and Tan (½ Anchor Steam and ½ Anchor Porter).



Ever wonder what your favorite beer would taste like aged in a bourbon barrel? Adding a shot of bourbon, or other liquor, to a beer is nothing new. The familiar Boilermaker “beer and a shot” is something that people have been drinking for longer than most of us have been alive. Rarely, though, has the intent been to heighten the enjoyment of one or both of the beverages. With the recent popularity that barrel aging has seen in the beer world, it only makes sense to test batch the results at home. Try adding a shot of your favorite liquor to your pint before pouring in your beer to emulate some of that barrel aged goodness. I’ve found interesting results when adding Reposado tequila to lightly sweet Belgian golden ales. The obvious combination of whisky with a strong stout is a favorite, but surprise yourself with a spicy Rye whiskey or a smoky Scotch next time.



Traditional cocktails can even benefit from a little brew love. Heard of beer margaritas? It’s a concoction that mixes frozen limeade with tequila and beer to create something that approximates a margarita without the unnatural green color and a bit of fizz. I like the idea, but I could do without the limeade. Try using beer in your favorite “from scratch” margarita on the rocks for surprising results. Stories have been told about the original Bloody Mary being made with, or including, beer. I’m not sure how much of those stories is true, but I do know that the Michelada and “red beer” seem to have a lot in common with the vodka-powered cocktail. Try your next Bloody Mary with a few ounces of your favorite brew to see how true the rumors might be. The richer flavors of a porter or stout sound like they’d be a welcome addition to a spicy Bloody Mary the morning after a few too many.

All of this history and all of these mixes add up to one simple fact, it doesn’t matter how you enjoy your beer as long as you enjoy it. Fruit your beer, garnish your Belgian white or your German hefe with a slice of citrus. Dose your barleywine with a shot of brandy. Serve your next stout up with a scoop of ice cream, a splash of raspberry liqueur and a crazy straw. No one should care how you do it, as long as you enjoy it and you share it with others that will enjoy it too.

continues on pg 6

A Brewing Mix Up continued from pg 5

BEER MARGARITA

When I started this article, I'd never had a Beer Margarita. I'd heard about them and in doing a bit of poking around online, I'd read about them. The use of limeade in just about every one of the recipes I found had me discouraged. I decided, the night I planned to finish my article, to craft a "from scratch" Beer Margarita. Here is my recipe. It's really simple, because I felt it should be. The tequila can easily be replaced by a quality mezcal. I think the smoky flavor would add a tremendous amount of depth to the drink, but I didn't have any on hand.

I know the weather we've had lately doesn't lend itself to the enjoyment of a margarita the way a hot Texas summer does, so turn up your heater and fake a hot summer day.

1 ½ oz. Tequila (Silver or Blanco)
1 tsp. Sugar
1 oz. Lime juice (fresh squeezed)
4 oz. Cerveza

1. Add sugar, tequila and lime juice to a mixing container and stir to combine.
2. Add beer to tequila mixture and stir to combine, avoid over-stirring.
3. Fill glass with ice.
4. Pour mixture into glass and serve.
(Optional) Rub lime on rim of glass and salt before adding ice.



Notes: Use a beer with a noticeable character and a bit of bite. I used Bohemia and the flavor was great, but I would have liked a bit more hop bite. When I try this again, I think I'm going to try a citrusy IPA like Stone IPA. It's all about personal preference.

Got a blend or a drink you'd like to share? I'd love to try it. ☺



E-mail it to me at: jwilliams@specsonline.com



NEW ON SHELVES AT SPEC'S DOWNTOWN:

**Brooklyn Brooklyn-
Schneider Hopfen-Weisse
750ml**

Green Flash Grand Cru 22oz

Avery Mephistopheles '09 12oz



Get Into The Spirit!



**Make your message
enduring—engrave it!
Global Quality Imports will be
engraving bottles at two Spec's on
Friday, February 5th
(Think: Valentine Day!)**

**Spec's Bissonnet & Wesleyan
from 2-5pm**

**Smith Street Superstore
from 5-8pm**

Choose from:

Pendleton Whisky—an oak barrel-aged whisky distilled using the finest ingredients. Pendleton was specifically created to celebrate the bold spirit of the independence and hard-work ethic of The American Cowboy & Cowgirl. Pendleton is a proud sponsor of numerous rodeos throughout the U.S.

Laird's Applejack—a blended spirit with a unique base of apples, instead of rye or corn. The Laird family began America's first commercial distillery and holds the oldest Federal Bond Permit (#1). They supplied the American Revolution troops with Applejack, and it was also served in Abraham Lincoln's Springfield Illinois Tavern.

Yazi Ginger Vodka—a sweet, seductive and spicy elixir made from 4 different species of ginger, along with lemon, orange, cayenne & red pepper. The bottle will become a keepsake long after the vodka has been enjoyed.

The Irishman Irish Whiskey —70% Irish Malt Whiskey made from a unique Old Pot Still blend. Triple distilled and matured in Bourbon casks.