

Dinner with the masters

Craft offers monthly pairing meals

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FOR ALMOST TWO years, Craft Beer Market has been elevating beer's role at the dinner table by hosting monthly brewmasters dinners. Usually, the beers from one brewery are showcased, though the dinners may also be held around other themes, such as gluten-free beers.

The dinners cost \$60 per person, which includes all taxes and gratuities. Diners receive a full pour of a welcoming beer and then 8-oz. pours of each of four other beers to accompany four courses of dinner.

"We make the style of the menu match the personality of the brewery," explains Rob Swiderski, operating partner of Craft. "When we had our Phillips [Brewing of Victory, BC] dinner, the menu was fun, like Phillips is. But we had a more formal dinner recently with a more serious brewery."

Executive chef Paul McGreevy leads the Craft kitchen team in developing the menus. "The brewery we're working with picks the beers," he says. "We look at the beers and think about them progressively to put them in an order. I sit down with the sous-chefs and we all talk about the flavours we are picking up and then we develop the menu as a team."

Creativity is the driving force for the brewmasters dinners. The regular menu at Craft is fairly static, so these special events provide an opportunity for McGreevy and his team to unleash their artistic talents. "We don't want the menus to be redundant. We are always pushing the envelope," he says.

Beer is a subject never taught at culinary school, so preparing for each dinner requires McGreevy and the Craft chefs to break things down to basics of flavour combinations and balance; there are no established rules to follow. It certainly helps that McGreevy is himself passionate about beer.

McGreevy comes from a fine dining background. Even though he has worked at some of Calgary's finest restaurants, he leapt at the opportunity to work with beer at Craft. He now heads up the team not only in Calgary, but in Craft's upcoming Vancouver and Edmonton locations. He's as passionate about beer as the brewmasters he works with.

At each dinner, McGreevy and the brewery representative talk to the diners between each course. The brewery representative will give some background to the beer while McGreevy will explain what the kitchen team was trying to accomplish with the food. "I don't like to tell them what to taste," says McGreevy, "But I like to explain what our objective was; why we think the dish compliments the beer."

"A few years ago, the restaurant I was working with at the time had a beer pairing dinner," he says. "That was really novel back then. It's great that the beer culture has grown so much in Calgary that we can do this at Craft every month."

The next brewmasters dinner will be a Belgian theme on August 20. The following dinner will be in collaboration with Deschutes Brewery of Bend, Oregon. These events always sell out, so get your tickets early at Craft or by visiting calgary.craftbeermarket.ca. ▶▶



BOOZE