

CRAFT BEER GETS CRAFTIER

Adding wine to the brew gives it a whole new dimension. And it's great with food.

By Sara Schneider

HYBRIDS WE WISH hadn't happened: jeggings, infomercials, sporks. A much more promising mashup: beer brewed with wine.

"I'm surprised you don't see it more," says Scott Kendall, co-owner and executive chef of Carpe Diem Wine Bar in Napa and maker of various beer-wine hybrids. "Wine adds a whole new dimension to beer. It gives it complexity, aromatics."

As it turns out, it's not exactly a new thought. A beverage residue found in a Turkish tomb—possibly that of King Midas—inspired the brewers at Dogfish Head Craft Brewery to launch a modern version: "Midas Touch," an ale brewed with Muscat grapes.

Recipes for beer-wine hybrids differ, but in general, a little grape must (crushed grapes, including skins, seeds, and juice) is fermented, at least partially, with the beer, so the fruit flavors are well integrated with the grain. The base beer might be a Belgian-style ale, an IPA, even a sour. And the grape varieties that are added range from Sauvignon Blanc and Riesling to Pinot Noir and Syrah.

Kendall calls beer-wine hybrids "a chef's dream." On his list of foods better matched to hybrid brews than to traditional beers or wines: flatbread, seafood, salads, burgers, cheeses, even dessert. We tested his theories here at *Sunset*, and we agree. (See our favorite pairings at right.)

These beer-wine hybrids are just starting to proliferate, so they can be hard to find. Watch for them at the cutting-edge taps and beer lists near you.

SIP



Three great beer-wine hybrids

Dogfish Head "Sixty-One"

India Pale Ale (\$8.75/fourpack). The Syrah added to this Delaware beer comes from California. It's a bittersweet IPA with a strong herbal hop character integrated with sweet strawberry and raspberry fruit.

PAIR WITH Sausage pizza, bacon burgers, hot dogs with caramelized onions.

The Bruery "Confession"

(\$25/750 ml.; sold to The Bruery club members). A collaboration with Fess Parker Winery & Vineyard, this sour ale brewed with Riesling has an earthy, yeasty character softened by Riesling's apple fruit.

PAIR WITH Cobb salad, fish tacos, calamari, and oysters.

Firestone Walker "Li'l Mikkell"

(on tap only). A collaboration with Mikkeller Brewery, made with Sauvignon Blanc and Chenin Blanc, then aged in barrels. The most winelike hybrid of the three, it's spicy and citrusy, with delicate apple and toasty oak flavors.

PAIR WITH Crab Louis, fish 'n' chips, white-sauce pizza, onion rings. ☞



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