

BEEER

at the

FEAST

As we rev up for holiday dining and bottle-bringing, **Kendall Jones** offers his favorite beer pairings for wine lovers

FOR TOO LONG we've thought of wine and beer like cats and dogs: that is, you are either a cat person or a dog person. As craft beer's popularity and availability continues to rise and grocery store beer aisles offer more diversity, wine aficionados are discovering that beer affords a comparable tasting experience, with dozens of style categories and wild flavor variations within each. No longer does fondness for one preclude your appreciation of the other, and in Washington, where we enjoy the spoils of more than 200 breweries and more than 800 wineries, why not enjoy both, especially come holiday feasting time?

The truth is, there are more similarities than differences between beer and wine. For instance, Amber Ale is like Merlot: it appeals to those who want something flavorful but uncomplicated and easy to drink. Some are better than others, but it is unlikely that a Merlot or an Amber Ale will blow your mind. The characteristic malty sweetness and mild bitterness of Amber Ale entertains but does not overwhelm the palate and is a perfect choice when you don't want to think and just want to drink—or when you seek a beer to pair with a variety of foods.

Adored by many but fully appreciated by few, India Pale Ale (IPA) is like Pinot Noir in that it is both simple and complex. IPA and Pinot Noir both provide intense flavors that immediately arouse the senses of casual drinkers, but also challenge the palates of sophisticates. Like Pinot Noir, a good IPA is subtle and nuanced, with tangled flavors that must be carefully untied like a knotted rope.

These days wine and beer share space on the dinner table at fine dining destinations. At Seattle's beloved Canlis, sommeliers double as beer experts offering valuable advice for pairing your meal with a bottle from the restaurant's beer cellar. That might sound blasphemous if you're an old-school wine lover, but today's craft beers offer a rich and exciting tasting experience, the kind that made you start loving wine in the first place.



Enjoy a hearty Merlot but prefer something brewed with dinner? There's a beer for that

KENDALL'S FEAST-FRIENDLY BEER PICKS

**IF YOU LIKE
SAUVIGNON BLANC, TRY...**



PRE-FLIGHT PILSNER, AIRWAYS BREWING COMPANY (\$2.75/8 ounce can; airways-brewing.com) Sparkling yellow with a frothy white head, the aroma of this light-bodied lager from this Kent brewery conjures thoughts of tall, golden grain waving in the breeze. A fresh, crisp cracker flavor dances with a grassy, herbal hop character, then finishes dry and does not linger; the flavors are subtle and short-lived, but also sharp and snappy. Think of it as you would a Sauvignon Blanc. It's a beer easily

overpowered by rich dishes, so use it to wash down fresh shellfish, like oysters on the half shell or steamed clams, or pair it with cured meats like ham or prosciutto.

IF YOU LIKE MERLOT, TRY...



IMMERSION AMBER, TWO BEERS BREWING COMPANY (\$9/6 pack; twobeersbrewery.com)

Deep and hazy red, the dark tan foam releases faint aromas of caramel, biscuit and just a hint of fruit. The flavor of this SoDo-brewed beer is malty and rich without being overly sweet, with a nice, gentle bitterness that lingers on the back of the tongue. Similar to Merlot, Amber Ale's generally mild character pairs with just about anything at the holiday feast, but especially well with dark turkey meat and spicy gravy.

IF YOU LIKE CHARDONNAY, TRY...



SPIN CYCLE RED ESB, NO-LI BREWHOUSE

(\$5/22-ounce bottle; nolibrewhouse.com) Sitting atop a bright and clear copper-red body, the thick, lacey, nearly white head exudes an aroma of fresh bread smeared lightly with jam. The flavor is surprisingly hop-forward and balances a pleasant caramel sweetness with sharp citrus notes.

Like a good Chardonnay, this beer has plenty of body but still manages to be light and refreshing. Serve this Spokane-brewed beer alongside a green salad with a rich, creamy dressing, or pair it with something earthy like a Brussel sprout casserole.

IF YOU LIKE PINOT NOIR, TRY...



RUUD AWAKENING IPA, OLD SCHOOLHOUSE BREWING COMPANY

(\$5.50/22-ounce bottle; oldschoolhousebrewery.com) An unashamed Washington hop bomb, this award-winning beer from Winthrop reeks gloriously of tropical fruit and resinous pine, intoxicating the palate with a massive burst of spicy

hop character and a plethora of undefinable citrus notes. Like a well-crafted Pinot Noir, this beer is bold, fruity and nuanced, and if there is something hot and spicy on the table, Ruud Awaken-

ing IPA is up to the challenge, or use it to add some life to a typically dull ambrosia salad.

IF YOU LIKE SYRAH, TRY...



PROFANITY HILL PORTER, SCHOONER EXACT BREWING COMPANY

(\$3.99/22-ounce bottle; schoonereexact.com) This deep, cola-colored Porter brings a rich but restrained cornucopia of flavors to the table, like unsweetened chocolate, vanilla, roasted nuts and caramel, and

then it finishes dry with practically no bitterness lingering. Like Syrah, this SoDo-brewed beer is approachable but robust and can stand up to rich dishes like oyster stuffing, but if there is something smoked on the table—a turkey or ham—the beer's otherwise faint smoke flavors will come to life.

IF YOU LIKE ZINFANDEL, TRY... DARK STAR IMPERIAL OATMEAL STOUT, FREMONT BREWING COMPANY

(\$15/growlers only; fremontbrewing.com) The light brown head on this dark-as-night stout releases an aroma reminiscent of a handful of chocolate-covered malt balls, with just a hint of molasses. Like Zinfandel, this beer is not for the faint of heart, with luscious and sinfully intense flavors. Creamy and silky smooth, each



sip washes your tongue with waves of flavor: oats, sweet chocolate, vanilla, burnt sugar and a faint alcohol burn. For a special treat, look for the bourbon barrel-

aged version of this beer (Kentucky Dark Star). Either style of this Fremont-brewed behemoth is perfect for dessert but will overwhelm a pumpkin pie, so consider pairing it with chocolate mousse, chocolate cream pie, or simply use vanilla ice cream to make a Dark Star float. **S**

All beers are available in cans, bottles and/or growler refills at the brewery; some are also available at Chuck's Hop Shops (chuckshopshop.com), BevMo (bermo.com) and area grocery stores.



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