

# Great beer and fine dining

BY NEIL MILLER

**A**ward-winning chef Martin Bosley is the first to admit that he was totally surprised at the recent Beervana event. "Discovering beer and food matching was a real epiphany for me. It opened up new possibilities - a whole layer of taste and demand we had completely ignored for a long time. I was very sceptical at the beginning but the experience was a true eye-opener," he explains.

At Beervana, Martin and I ran six sold-out beer and food sessions where we matched some of his famous food with the best beers from around New Zealand. The dishes included pan-seared scallops on spinach paired with Mac's Great White and Asian-spiced duck breast on a Thai herb salad partnered with Three Boys IPA.

Having previously thought of beer as a beverage only to be drunk cold after moving the lawn, Martin conceded he

was "blown away" by the taste of craft and boutique beers. "Great beer is like great wine in terms of flavour and in terms of how it can partner with food. Previously, I'd thought that only wine could go with what I cook," he says.

After talking to some of the thousands of guests at Beervana, Martin says he also realised his restaurant, the eponymous and rather excellent Martin Bosley's, was missing out on business because of its sub-standard beer list.

"We had never paid attention to our beers before. We basically got some big international brands and never thought about it again. I

met people who said they liked the sound of my food but didn't dine there because they didn't drink wine and our beer list was pretty awful. It is important to take people who drink beer instead of wine seriously - they are a quality market," Martin says.

A fridge full of international lagers was hardly a great fit with Martin's philosophy of eating locally and eating seasonally either. As a result, Martin is "ripping out" his beer selection and replacing them with regional beers of various styles.

Beer will also enter his fabled degustation menu. "It is always a struggle to match chocolate and wine. Neil and I did a chocolate cake and stout match, which proved that dark, rich, chocolatey beers were the perfect foil. It's going on the menu."

It's going in his fridge as well. Martin freely acknowledges that it had been "many years" since he bought a beer for his home. However, one of the best matches at Beervana was his dense, decadent fruit cake topped with a slice of

vintage English cheddar and served with a glass of Tuiatara Ardennes, a strong Belgian-style ale. "Ardennes is a gold-medal winning beer from my local brewery.

At the supermarket recently I picked up a six-pack of the Ardennes and put it in my trolley. I just wanted someone to ask me what I'm drinking. Now I have something to say about it," he laughs.

A young veteran of the industry, Martin predicts a bright future for craft beer saying "the brewers have a great story to tell. They are keen to lift the industry and get beers into fine restaurants".

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