

Hip Hops

Culinary-and-craft-beer pairings are Miami's thriving foodie fad

| By Hilary Saunders and Jessica Sick |

Call it a sign of the economic times or just our short attention span. We're off steakhouses and onto burger joints; lounging in speakeasies instead of on rooftops; and, thanks to an influx of beer bars and the emergence of craft beer dinner pairings, swilling cerveza instead of Syrah. Move over, Pinot; hello, pilsner.

"Beer has a lot more complexity than people think it does," says Dave Crisafi, blogmaster at the South Florida Beer Blog (southfloridabeerblog.com), a local website that features reviews, interviews with beer-meisters and even a beer events calendar. A salesman by day for distributor Fresh Beer, Crisafi sees a correlation between Miami's new beer infatuation and organic-and local-produce trends. "Heineken, Miller Light and Corona, you can get everywhere," Crisafi says, noting that in response, there is a growing market for beer from smaller, local breweries.

Whetting that appetite are spots like **Cervezas** (5835 Sunset Dr., South Miami, 305.397.8125), where customers can go local with a Native Lager or go big (as in alcohol content) with the St. Bernardus Abt 12 Abbey Ale, which clocks in at 10.5 percent alcohol by volume. At **The Democratic Republic of Beer** (255 N.E. 14 St., Miami, 305.372.4161) in Downtown, more than 400 brews await aficionados, including crowd favorites such as the Lambec and Chimay. Instead of separating food and drink menus, DRB has a single menu that's sorted alphabetically by country—from Argentina to Wales—so that patrons can pair their brew with a typical dish from the region from which it hails.

And it's not just beer fans who are tapping into this trend. As area restaurants like Design District staple **Pacific Time** (35 N.E. 40 St., Miami, 305.722.7369) host dinners where food is complemented with craft beers versus the standard wine pairing, foodies are getting their fill, too. At the recently opened **Lou's Beer Garden** (7337 Harding Ave., North Miami Beach, 305.704.7879), chef-owner Luis "Lou" Ramirez is endeavoring to showcase how microbrews can bring out

DRAUGHT PICKS
Shock Top Belgian White, Left Hand Brewing Co.'s Left Hand Milk Stout and Stoudt's Scarlet Lady Ale—on tap at Lou's Beer Garden.



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the flavors in food. During Ramirez's 5-Part Beer Pairing Series, an event that takes place the first Wednesday of each month through September, five microbrews are paired with five appetizers—a shorter and less expensive alternative that might be more appropriate to Miami's nascent beer culture than pairings sampled over long multi-course meals. One of Ramirez's recent combinations? Flying Dog Brewery's "Raging Bitch" Belgian-style IPA with his spicy crab cakes. "The IPA, which

is hoppy and rich in body, goes well with seafood," the chef explains. "It cools you off."

Though foodies in other cities have been trading wine for wheat for several years now, Ramirez is hopeful that the trend is finally gaining traction in Miami. "I hope it opens up a lot of world beers to the city of Miami," he says. "So many people don't know what a microbrew is, but the beer pairings are changing that slowly. I hope the knowledge increases and people start drinking [craft beers] more." **M**