

# Match-making

For more information on Beer With Food Week visit the website at: [www.beerwithfoodweek.co.uk](http://www.beerwithfoodweek.co.uk)

With Beer With Food Week looming fast – from 14 to 20 March – chef RICHARD FOX presents some ideas for beer dishes to cook up that are certain to tempt hungry diners

## Ideas for your bar-snack menu



- **Liquid bread:** Beer has been referred to historically as liquid bread – ie, it's grain based and contains yeast. Suggest that on this basis, beer is the ideal accompaniment for your entire sandwich menu.
- **Platters to share:** Ensure a stock of 75cl bottles – Stella Artois, Hoegaarden and Greene King's Beer to Dine For, to name but a few, all do large bottles. Some are corked and caged. Offer them with your platters to share in an ice bucket with branded glasses.
- **Welsh rarebit:** A fabulous snack item, it's luxury cheese on toast and can be jazzed up with the addition of bacon or a fried egg. It's got beer in it, and is therefore a natural partner for just about any beer.
- **Beer bread:** Flat breads can be made simply by whizzing up some flour, water and seasoning in a food processor with a little baking powder, then rolled out and char-grilled. Add a little beer to the mix for extra flavour and serve with dips.
- **Barbecue sauces:** Add beer to all kinds of dipping sauces for added interest and flavour – a smoked beer in a barbecue sauce is as good as it gets.
- **Mexican platter:** Serve with Mexican beer – or try IPA for a surprisingly perfect beer and food match.

## Ideas for your starters menu

- **Smoked beers:** The Germans and Americans are notable producers. Try matching them with smoked fish, such as salmon or mackerel. An accompaniment of horseradish cream and a crushed potato salad would be perfect for the mackerel, while a beetroot pickle would be a great match for the smoked salmon.
- **Wheat beers:** These are often cloudy and contain coriander and orange peel. They're light and zesty and perfect with fish. Mussels are still in season, so use the beer in place of wine for the marinière. Hoegaarden and Paulener are great examples of these wheat beers.
- **Ales:** Traditional English ales, either bottled or draught, are great matches for cheese-based starters and hearty soups. French onion soup, or a hearty Tuscan Bean soup will make great partners



- for a big, malty ale. Capitalise on your local breweries' artisan offerings.
- **Fruit beers:** These wonderfully balanced, corked and caged, spontaneously-fermented beers, not only add theatre and diversity to your beer range, but women love them. They go superbly well with chicken liver pâté – as well as foie gras, if you're really pushing out the purchasing boat!
- **Porters:** Surprisingly, delicate diver scallops are a perfect match for good, dark English porter – the sweet caramelisation from the seared scallop matches perfectly with those elements in the beer.
- **Japanese beers:** These are crisp, golden and cuttlingly clean. It's no coincidence that the Japanese love them with their sushi and sashimi. Serve with carpaccio, or anything raw!

## Desserts menu ideas

- **Porters:** These have an inherent "chocolatyness". Serve with rich, chocolate desserts for a no-compromise beer and food match.
- **Belgian-style strong golden ales:** Very high in alcohol, almost whisky like and very complex, these beers match with steamed fruit puddings with Chantilly cream (try adding some beer to the cream), as well as sticky toffee pudding with a refreshing vanilla ice cream. Beers such as Delirium and Hoegaarden Grand Cru fit the bill perfectly.
- **Fruit beers:** These are a "no-brainer" for desserts. Try serving with a chocolate tart and raspberry coulis, or better still – a strawberry fool... hold me back!
- **Barley wines:** Not wine, but beer, and believe me, they're making a comeback. Try serving with crème brûlée or sweet pancakes and you'll see why.
- **Wheat beers:** A refreshing way to end a meal – it's almost like having a sorbet to cleanse the palette. On that note try adding them to an Italian "semi-freddo" for the perfect "beer ice cream" experience.
- **Just about any beer!** With cheese. The real fun is getting the perfect combination. Malty, fruity and hoppy ales are all fabulous with Stilton.

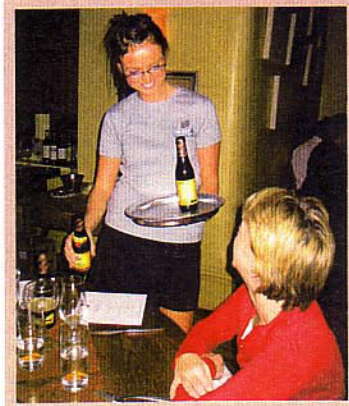


## Ideas for your main-course menu

- **Pilsners:** Pilsner lagers have fabulous, refreshing qualities. They'll cut through fatty foods and oily fish as well as refreshing the mouth with spicy foods. At their best, they're floral, honeyed and buttery. Match them with seared fillet of salmon or Thai green curry for total food and drink perfection.
- **Abbey and Trappist beers:** Mostly from Belgium, these are strong, fruity and very complex. They'll make perfect matches for braised lamb shank, served with mash and a rich gravy. Casseroles and stews will also benefit from their full flavours – and will certainly appreciate a good slug in the cooking liquor.
- **Bitter:** A classic English ale with a classic English roast dinner – it's a must for Sunday lunch. Alternatively, match up with your main course pie offering.
- **Flavoured beers:** And I don't mean alcopops! Look out for such specialities as Fuller's Honeydew (with real honey) and Fraoch Heather Ale (with real heather) and match them up with specific flavours in, or associated with your dishes. So, maybe a honey infused lamb tajine with the Fuller's, and Scottish game for the Fraoch – close your eyes and you'll be there!
- **IPA:** Although not as strong and hoppy as they once were, their historic association with India still makes them a great foil for the hot, spicy dishes from this part of the world. Try a spicy dahl made from red lentils – serve with a mango chutney and yoghurt raita for the complete curry experience.
- **Wheat beers:** These refreshing, zesty beers will serve as the perfect accompaniment for creamy white meat dishes, such as baked chicken breast with a creamy mustard or mushroom sauce. The herb and citrus elements to the beer also contribute to "a match made in heaven" when it comes to the magnificently fragrant Malaysian laksa.

## Other foodie ideas

- **Beer shots:** Serve a selection of beers in a shot glass, included in a set price, just to give people a taste – and create a point of difference.
- **Interactive beer:** Serve a chocolate pudding with a tiny measure of chocolate stout for the customer to pour over the dessert.
- **Themed night:** Hold a beer-and-food gourmet night in your pub, matching a different beer with each course.
- **Cuisine a la biere:** Try holding a cooking-with-beer live demonstration in your pub, perhaps trying it in with a gourmet night.
- **Sharing:** Offer customers the chance to share a different speciality beer with each course by offering smaller "tasting glasses" with each bottle.
- **Beer products:** Make up a selection of "beer pickles", put into sterilised jars and sell on the bar counter.



Richard Fox is a director of beer and food consultancy the F&B Partnership. For more information visit [www.fandbpartnership.com](http://www.fandbpartnership.com)