

I'll Have a Big Scoop of Beer, Please

A double treat to beat the heat: ice cream made with suds.

By LUCY BURNINGHAM

They are two of summer's signature indulgences. But ice cream and beer, one a childhood staple and the other a toast of adulthood, have long worked opposite ends of the picnic.

Now they're starting to become acquainted, as a new kind of sweet gains traction: beer-flavored ice creams and floats, from a number of small dairies around the country.

Think ice cream made with Belgian-style Tripel ale and apricot jam; a three-hops ice cream with chunks of upside-down cake baked with candied pineapple, tangerine zest and hop leaves; or a scoop of vanilla floated in a creamy milk stout.

Mixing alcohol and dairy isn't revolutionary. Liquor has shown up in bourbon milkshakes and rum-raisin ice cream. But as artisanal ice-cream makers seek local ingredients that push the envelope, craft beers offer new dimensions, said Jeni Britton Bauer, the founder of Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams in Columbus, Ohio.

"Beer can help bring some bitterness and dryness to an ice cream, which is traditionally sweeter than other desserts," she said. "It has this great functionality."

Inspiration for flavors can come from brewers, beers or the culinary world. On first sip, a porter named Sue, made with smoked-cherry-wood malt by the Yazoo Brewing Company of Nashville, tasted meaty to Ms. Britton Bauer. "I thought: You know what we need with this? The kind of coating you'd put on a roast."

So, she tossed pecans, cashews and Spanish peanuts in cayenne, rosemary, brown sugar and salt, roasted the nuts and added them to an ice cream made with the porter. The result, Yazoo Sue With Rosemary Bar Nuts, is now a Jeni's best-seller.

Techniques to get beer flavors into ice cream vary. Ms. Britton Bauer tried boiling beer to reduce it before adding it to ice cream but said the heat destroyed desirable flavors. Now, she adds unaltered beer to the ice-cream base just before freezing.

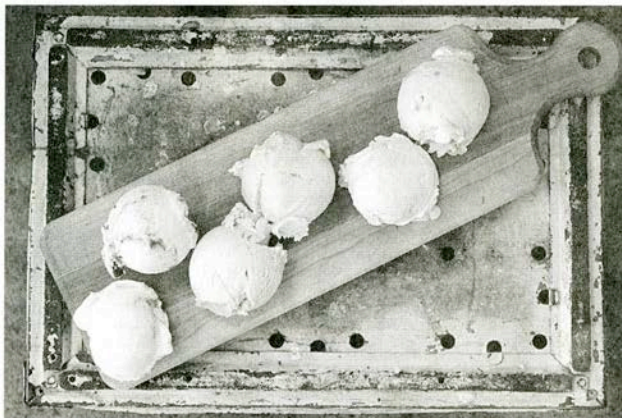
Humphry Slocombe Ice Cream, the trendsetting shop in the Mission District of San Francisco, creates beer ice creams every year for that city's Beer Week. They're made by reducing each beer by half before adding milk and cream, said the owner and chef, Jake Godby. "When the base is done, I might add a little more beer if I think the flavor needs to be more pronounced."



Jeni Britton Bauer, of Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams in Columbus, Ohio, pours a Yazoo Brewing porter into a tub of heavy cream, the beginnings of a beer-flavored ice cream called Yazoo Sue With Rosemary Bar Nuts, above right. Other companies joining the trend include Salt & Straw in Portland, Ore., which has developed a six-pack of beer ice creams, right. Five of the scoops do not contain any actual beer but instead use beer ingredients, like malts, lactic acid, yeasts and hops.



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SUSAN SEIBERT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The marriage isn't always harmonious. The water in beer tends to create icy textures, making it difficult to make a creamy ice cream with discernible beer flavors. So the darkest, most concentrated beers are the best candidates for beer ice cream.

Some producers avoid iciness by keeping beer out altogether. Tyler Malek, the head ice-cream maker at Salt & Straw in Portland, Ore., has developed a "six pack"

of beer ice creams, five of which do not include any beer. He worked with local brewers to "deconstruct, then reconstruct" specific beers into ice creams using a variety of malts, lactic acid, a partly fermented beer, yeasts, a bourbon barrel and whole and pellet hops. "We're pushing the limits of what you can do with ice cream and food in general," Mr. Malek said.

There may be limits, though, on mixing

innocent sweets and adult beverages. In March, the Brazilian Advertising Self-Regulating Council warned the brewer of Skol, a popular beer in Brazil, that its Skol-flavored ice cream could entice children because posts about the product appeared on the company's Facebook fan page. A spokesman for Skol, which is owned by Anheuser-Busch InBev, wrote in an e-mail message that the ice cream, with an alcohol content of 0.12 percent, was available only to adult customers in bars in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration regulates food products with up to 0.5 percent alcohol by volume, and the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau regulates anything above that. (Additional state-by-state laws can also apply.)

Frozen Pints, an Atlanta manufacturer, sells seven beer ice creams that fall under the jurisdiction of both agencies, so nutrition and alcohol content must be listed on each pint. (All of the other ice creams in this article contain less than 0.5 percent alcohol by volume.) Frozen Pints' Peach Lambic, for example, has 1 percent alcohol; Vanilla Bock, 3.1 percent. As they have more than 0.5 percent (and because Georgia treats them as beer), they are considered an alcoholic product and can be sold only to people of legal drinking age.

"It's not often you get carded for buying ice cream," said Ari Fleischer, a founder of Frozen Pints. Mr. Fleischer (no relation to the former White House press secretary of that name) came up with the idea for the dessert after a friend accidentally knocked a beer over near an ice-cream maker.

For those of drinking age seeking a looser union of beer and ice cream, beer floats offer a sweet buzz.

"What's universally appealing about floats is the way the creaminess of ice cream works with effervescence," said Julia Collins, the director of restaurant development for Murray's Cheese in New York. Murray's Cheese Bar has a roster of beer floats that will change throughout the summer. "After every sip of creamy ice cream, the bubblyness clears the palate and makes your mouth ready for the next bite."

Murray's floats will be made with new house-made-cheese ice creams, including a Prairie Breeze Cheddar and peanut butter flavor. The inaugural float pairs a wild cherry Chiriboga Blue Cheese ice cream with Oud Beersel Framboise, a Belgian raspberry lambic — a tart and fruity combination that Ms. Collins said was designed purely "for an adult palate."