



PARKSVILLE Untapped

2012



Cheers! Santé! Salut! Proost!

by David Morrison

“Without question, the greatest invention in the history of mankind is beer. Oh, I grant you that the wheel was also a fine invention, but the wheel does not go nearly as well with pizza.” – Dave Barry

Like the amusing Mr. Barry, I am rather fond of beer. Oh, yes indeed, I love me some beer! I will admit there have been times when my approach to the consumption of said beverage was as basic as that of, say, Homer Simpson, but these middle-aged days my appreciation is considerably more cultured. Yes, for this former debauchee it is now all about sapidity, nose, body and finish, don't you know, rather than how many barrels of suds I can guzzle, and how quickly.

It is also about the joy experienced in exploring the steadily swelling range of delicious offerings available from the fertile imaginations of brewers in the Pacific

Northwest. In recent years there has been a growing trend for beers that on paper are both completely crazy and an ale purist's worst nightmare, but I think pushing the envelope in this way is great fun! So while I will likely always favour the traditional - a hop-loaded Indian Pale Ale, a hearty stout or a crisp, ice-cold Pilsner - bring on those tangerine and chocolate mint-flavoured brews, I say! I'll try them all! In the realms of life's great and simple pleasures variety should always be the spice of life, so I applaud experimentation in the production of alcoholic beverages just as I do in any branch of the culinary arts.

Hey, did I mention that I like beer? I like it so much, in fact, that drinking it is simply not enough. So to quench my thirst further I also read about it. For the curious I can recommend Nicholas Pashley's riotously funny, though educational *Notes on a Beermat: Drinking and Why It's Necessary*,

and *Cheers! An Intemperate History of Beer in Canada*, just for starters. Then there is also a pretty comprehensive overview of local brews in the form of Comox Valley resident Leo Buijs' *Beers of British Columbia*. A self-published, labour-of-love guide to, well, the clue is in the title, Buijs' splendid book is serving as a personal checklist as I taste my way slowly through the many fine microbrews produced on Vancouver Island and around the province.

To this end, what better way could there be to continue, or indeed begin, an appreciation of the wonderful local products detailed in *Beers of British Columbia* than to attend an event where a feast of the featured breweries will be gathered? This will be the case at *Parksville Untapped*, hosted by The Beach

continued on pg 31

Club Resort (181 Beachside Drive) on the evening (6:30-9:00) of Thursday February 23. You can bet your bottom dollar that I will be in attendance.

Parksville Untapped is the beer component of, and effectively the launch event for, the annual *Parksville Uncorked Wine & Food Festival*. Running February 23-26 inclusive, with events at both The Beach Club Resort and Tigh-Na-Mara (1155 Resort Drive), which are partnered for this festival, this is just the fourth occasion for *Uncorked*, and only the second for *Untapped*, yet the event has already established itself as a major date on the Vancouver Island gastronomes calendar.

As you may have heard down the grapevine, I quite like beer, so I recently had a natter with Wendy Sears, Director of Sales and Marketing at The Beach Club Resort, to find out what might await beer enthusiasts at *Parksville Untapped*. "Well, we're going to open up the lobby and the ballroom," she begins, "and it'll be very much like a wine-tasting event, the same kind of premise, where there'll be stations to go to and sample the beers."

As we went to press the full line-up of breweries represented at *Untapped* was yet to be finalized, but as Sears explained "around fifteen" had already confirmed. "We'll have Driftwood Brewing Co. (Victoria); Surgenor Brewing Company Ltd. (Comox); we've got Longwood Brew Pub from Nanaimo coming up; Phillips Beer (Victoria); Vancouver Island Brewery (Victoria), of course; Wolf Brewing Company (Nanaimo) and Pacific Western Brewing Company (Burnaby/Prince

George), to name a few. There are also two cideries coming, being Sea Cider Farm & Ciderhouse, based down in Victoria, as well as, of course, Merridale Cider (Cobble Hill)."

So far, so very good! There are already a few personal favourites in there. I really enjoy Wolf's (formerly Fat Cat) amber nectars, and Phillips beers never fail to please me. I love Phillips' signature craft beers, their wonderful limited editions, and their unfailingly humorous marketing. Therefore be warned, Beach Club Resort, that I may need to be physically extricated from the Phillips station through fear of over-fawning.

I do not feel it is unreasonable to worship at the altar of great beers as much as I do, especially as I am in historically fine company in doing so. The ancient Greek philosopher and mathematician Plato, for example, said: "He was a wise man who invented beer." Benjamin Franklin was another dude quite keen on the odd brewski, going as far as to state that, "beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy." So in the event anyone is concerned by my beer obsession, I would just like to point out that Plato and Franklin are universally regarded as geni.

Parksville Untapped is not all about beer, however. As the full name of the umbrella *Uncorked* event illustrates, food will also feature heavily (although, if Dave Barry is planning on attending, I cannot confirm that pizza will be on the menu). In Leo Buijs' book he pays great attention to detailing ideal food pairings for a lot of the beers he reviews, so it could be fun trying to replicate his suggested matches on the night. For Driftwood's splendid Farmhand Ale,

to select just one, Buijs recommends such as beef, venison, mussels, walnuts, pecans, root vegetables, resinous herbs, and cheeses like Livarot, Oka and Comté. Are you drooling yet? I sure am.

Again, the full list of restaurants and food purveyors taking part was not finalized heading to press, but it is a solid bet the quality will be very high. "Some of the food participants will be the Rod & Gun (Parksville), Island Scallops (Qualicum Beach), Tigh-Na-Mara and ourselves, of course," reveals Wendy Sears.

To top it all, she concludes, "for part of the ticket price (\$49 plus applicable tax), just like a wine festival, when you come in you get your tasting glass which you can take home with you. It'll have the festival logo on it. There will also be entertainment, so it's all going to be a lot of fun!"

As with every event of *Parksville Uncorked Wine & Food Festival*, *Untapped* is set to be a great night, but you should not need me to remind you that it will be even better if the tempting ales on offer are enjoyed sensibly, in moderation! Let us enjoy it all together, in civilized celebration of the fare the skilled brewers and chefs of our island and province deliver to our table, and definitely not like Homer Simpson.

For further information about the Parksville Uncorked Wine & Food Festival and Parksville Untapped, including ticket reservations and prices; festival events and timings, plus resort packages, please visit www.parkvilleuncorked.com or telephone 1-888-760-2008.