

Beer & Cheese Pairings

by Mike Retzlaff

Everyone I know (at least of any consequence) likes beer and just about everyone likes cheese. It is often a very pleasant experience to consume both at the same sitting! Unfortunately, those combinations that I felt paired really well have been lost due to my affliction with CRS (can't remember shit). However, I'm pretty sure the pairing of artificial beer with artificial cheese was never on that list.



When pairing anything, we're hoping that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Carbonation can obliterate or enhance the texture of a cheese. Hoppiness can augment or overwhelm the flavor. A malty beer can completely negate the subtle nuances of delicate cheeses.

The key rules of pairing are:

- Find characteristics from the beer and the cheese that complement each other.
- Find characteristics that contrast with one another.

Complementary examples include:

- * Nut brown ales pair well with the nutty flavors in some cheeses like Asiago.
- * Sour beers pair well with bright and citrusy goat's milk cheeses.

Contrasting examples include:

- * Stouts have some sweeter and darker notes that work well with stronger bleu cheeses.
- * Sour beers pair well with rich cheeses - especially with stronger flavors.

I found the following pairing guide and thought a few others might also find it interesting and even helpful. Of course, this is not the final say-so as your mileage may vary. All tastes are subjective but it certainly seems a good place to start. It might even encourage us to try alternate pairings. Keep notes if you are subject to CRS!

Hard Cheeses

Mild Cheddar	Czech Pilsners, Scottish Ales, Brown Ales
Sharp Cheddar	Stout, Pale Ale, IPA
Aged Cheddar (X Sharp)	Czech and German Pilsners
Smoked Gouda	Schlenkerla Rauchbier, Gratzler
Dutch Gouda	Amber Ale
Aged Gouda	American Barleywine
Gruyere	Belgian Wit, Wheat, Bock, Oktoberfest, Porter
Emmenthal (Swiss)	Amber ales, Oktoberfest, Marzen
Asiago	Nut Brown Ale, Fuller's London Porter
Provolone	American PA, Vienna lagers (Dos Equis)
Parmigiano-Reggiano	English IPA, Amber Ale, Marzen
Havarti	Belgian Pale, American Pils
Pepper Jack	Winter Warmer, Hopitoulas IPA
Feta	Light Lagers, American Wheat
Bleu	Porter, Imperial Stout, IPA
Roquefort	Strong Belgian Ales, Dark ales
Stilton	English Barleywine, Old Ale, Oatmeal Stout
Gorgonzola	American Barleywine, IPA

Suggested Beers

Soft Cheeses

Boursin	Belgian Tripel
Farmer's (pressed ricotta)	Belgian Golden Ale
Mascarpone	Saison, Fruit beers
Munster	Kolsch, Flanders Red Ale
Washed Rind (soft & stinky)	Strong Belgian Ales
Camembert / Brie	IPA, Kriek, NOLA Blonde
Goat	Wit, Weizen, Lambic, Flanders Red, Oud Bruin

Suggested Beers

There are plenty of other combinations to consider. In addition, particular breads and crackers can really enhance the experience. Perhaps the best combination for you will be an unexpected surprise. In any case, if you have a favorite or happen upon a really good pairing, say something and we'll have a follow-up on this subject. It would be good to put together a list of specific pairings; especially with local beers.

Send your ideas and comments to mickey.61@cox.net

Bon appétit!