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## BEER MAKER'S DINNER



LARISSA MUELLER/SENTINEL

Darcey Yerly slices duck breast as Gina Gardner reaches for pecans to top a shrimp and watercress salad at the Beer Maker's Dinner at Pino Alto at Cabrillo College on Thursday.

## Students pair hops, haute cuisine at Cabrillo event

By ANN PARKER  
Sentinel correspondent

Beer with gourmet cuisine? Don't scoff. The proof is in the pairing.

I attended the first annual Beer Maker's Dinner at Pino Alto restaurant last week, where the 18 students of Cabrillo College's advanced culinary arts class paired Seabright Brewery ales, stout and barleywine with an ambitious four-course menu including watercress shrimp salad, nut-crusted duck and lavender ice cream.

Budweiser and burgers this was not.

My friend Tom and I were

SEE BEER ON D4

## BEER

Continued from D1

greeted at the door by the politely professional host, Daniel Ennamorato, our first contact with the all-student staff. At this 40-seat teaching restaurant, open during Cabrillo's spring and fall semesters, every aspect from recipes to cleanup is executed by students such as Nate Levy, the chef that evening.

Our linen-topped table by the fireplace displayed a formal table setting — three forks, two spoons and two knives. Another nice touch was the spring bouquet in a celadon-green vase with matching salt and pepper shakers, all made by Cabrillo ceramics students.

The meal began with glasses of Busted Knuckle Ale, a brightly refreshing, slightly wheaty microbrew that was much more refined than its name. It nicely complemented the excellent bread (made in-house using spent brewer's grain) and sweet butter speckled with large-flake sea salt.

Our server, Gaby Silva, brought an amuse-bouche, or one-bite "mouth amusement" — a tiny golden-brown puff topped with chervil and what looked exactly like golden caviar.

"This is potato cake — with beer caviar," she said, explaining that the little pearls were made using the ale we were drinking.

I've sampled spherified ingredients before, but never beer. It made a lovely combination, the warm cakelet melting in my mouth punctuated by little pops of the faintly hoppy "caviar."

The first course arrived, an ingenious fried shrimp and watercress salad with orange and grapefruit sections, Australian Roaring Forties blue cheese, diced pecans and apple-malt vinaigrette. The plump shrimp were unusually tender and juicy under their thin beer-batter breading and arrived hot atop the salad, no easy accomplishment.

Our "intermezzo" palate-cleanser, a diminutive but dynamic scoop of lemon-



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Cabrillo College culinary program students cook for the Beer Maker's Dinner at Pino Alto on the Cabrillo campus on Thursday. Pino Alto Restaurant is staffed and run by culinary program students, who work twice a week and rotate roles, from maitre d' to dishwasher, server to chef.



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The dessert course of the Beer Maker's Dinner at Pino Alto on the Cabrillo College campus on Thursday consisted of a warm Chelsea bun and honey-lavender ice cream, paired with Seabright Barleywine from Seabright Brewery.

coriander-hops sorbet, created little flavor rockets of sour-sweet lemon bouncing brightly off the clean coriander and slightly bitter hop finish. Tom and I said "wow" in unison.

We shifted to the second course, clever potato "risotto" with shaved prosciutto, fresh green peas, corned beef and crispy black pudding bits, all generously strewn with peppery arugula from the restaurant's kitchen garden. I loved the combination of flavors and textures, including the corned beef nod to St. Patrick's Day. Served with Seabright's malt-rich Amber Ale, this course alone

was a meal.

Glasses of Oatmeal Stout arrived with our third course, my favorite: honey-nut crusted duck breast with coffee infusion, accompanied by duck fat fried fingerling potatoes, curly endive grown by Cabrillo horticulture students and dried cranberries. Our delicious duck medallions were elegantly presented, fork-tender and beautifully cooked. The fingerling potatoes were surprisingly delicate and the greens and cranberries added freshness and color. Dark, creamy and coffee-edged, the stout made an excellent pairing.

### IF YOU GO

PINO ALTO  
RESTAURANT

**WHERE:** Sesnon House, 6500 Soquel Ave., Aptos  
**HOURS:** Lunch, noon to 1:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday; dinner, 5:30-8:30 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday; the outside terrace opens at 5 p.m. for lighter, quicker fare Tuesday-Thursday. Dinner reservations advised; lunch reservations for parties of six or more with 24-hours notice. Closed April 4-10.

**NEXT EVENT:** May 1, second annual Dare to Pair food and wine pairing challenge

**AMBIANCE:** Historic house setting, refined but relaxed atmosphere and menu  
**DETAILS:** 479-6524; [www.cabrillo.edu/~kniven/CurrentDinner.html](http://www.cabrillo.edu/~kniven/CurrentDinner.html)

Dessert was served with Seabright Barleywine, a full-bodied, lightly fruity brew that suggested a beer/wine cross and nicely complemented the course. Our prettily decorated plates displayed a tender, sugar-glazed Chelsea bun (rather like a British cinnamon roll) that unfurled to reveal candied fruit; the accompanying housemade