

# CULINARY ADVENTURES

## On the beer and cheese trail

By Karen Boushie

Move over, wine and cheese, because during the last few years, beer and cheese pairings have been gaining in popularity. It's a match made in heaven for the state of Vermont, where delicious and award-winning cheeses abound, and craft beers are much appreciated by local fans. There are numerous opportunities at restaurants and festivals to sample beer and cheese combinations, and you're likely to find local restaurateurs and chefs enthusiastically promoting their favorite pairing.

One of those restaurateurs is Akash Parikh, owner of the Hearth & Candle right in the heart of Smugglers' Village. The Hearth's Vermont cheese board is one of the restaurant's most popular appetizers. Parikh says, "Vermont has some great cheese makers, and for the cheese plate appetizer, we just choose some of our favorites - a fun job." The Hearth has Vermont beers on draft as well, and Parikh and the waitstaff are happy to suggest pairings. Adjustments to the cheeses and beer offered may occur, because as Parikh notes, "We like to try new flavors and also some fabulous but small producers run out of certain items, which necessitates a change." Parikh has been doing a fair amount of reading (and experimenting) with beer and cheese pairing (another tough part of the job!), and notes this trend is especially good for Vermont, with its great hand crafted beer and cheese. The Hearth's cheese board appetizer is offered with savory roasted garlic, seasonal chutney and sliced apples, but Parikh has found that some cheese "purists" choose to have just cheese.

A short drive down the Mountain Road from Smugglers', you'll find the Brewster River Pub & Grill, where hearty pub fare fills stomachs emptied by a long ski and ride day. The pub has a variety of dishes for those who like to enjoy their cheese as an enhancement to a main dish. One example: Chef Billy Mossinghoff has created a special, house smoked meatloaf wrapped in the pub's own bacon, that is served with a Vermont Cabot cheddar cheese mornay sauce. The recommended beer pairing? The robust Alta Gracia coffee porter from Wolaver's Organic Ales in Middlebury, Vermont.

Moving on to burgers ... the Brewster River Pub offers a cheeseburger topped with Bayley Hazen blue cheese, characterized as having notes of "sweet grass, licorice and toasted nuts" by its makers at Jasper Hill Farm in Greensboro, Vermont. Mossinghoff suggests accompanying the burger with Rock Art Brewery's Ridge Runner beer to balance the tangy cheese with a sweet and smooth malt. Another burger on the menu, the Vermonter, is topped with Cabot cheddar, as well as grilled apple and maple barbecue sauce. A Vermont India Pale Ale (IPA) sets off the sweetness of the apple and barbecue sauce with the hops. The Brewster River Pub serves a Rock Art IPA, but the wealth of IPAs from Vermont breweries includes offerings from Harpoon, Long Trail, Wolaver's, Otter Creek, and Magic Hat.

As interest in beer and cheese pairings grew, Vermont's award-winning Cabot Cheese took the initiative to develop their "Herds 'n' Hops" brochure, which suggests complementary Cabot cheddars and microbrews. Those unaccustomed to matching up beer and the sharp





*A beer & cheese match  
made in heaven:  
cheddar ale soup*

flavors of cheddar cheese are likely to appreciate the brochure's straightforward guidelines: "Ales are generally more robust in flavor and require a delectably mild cheddar or one of Cabot's award-winning reduced fat cheddars to calm the taste buds. On the other hand, lively lagers are best balanced by full-flavored cheddars with lots of character, like Cabot's Seriously Sharp Hunters, fiery Habanero, or aged-to-perfection Vintage Choice." The brochure can be found online at the cooperative's website ([cabotcheese.coop/beerandcheddar](http://cabotcheese.coop/beerandcheddar)), along with recipes for dishes that incorporate the selected cheese.

With beer and cheese described with such diverse adjectives as creamy, fresh, floral, lemony, tangy, soft, robust, delicate, caramel, and nutty, combining the two can be both an art and an excellent adventure to share with friends and family. Queen Elizabeth I of England was only slightly off the mark when she observed, "A meal of bread, cheese and beer constitutes the perfect food." With all due respect, Elizabeth; we'll skip the bread.

*Karen Boushie is the public relations director at Smugglers' Notch Resort.*

The Hearth & Candle – open daily, 5:00 pm to 9:30 pm. Located in Smugglers' Village. (802) 644-1260

The Brewster River Pub & Grill – open Monday through Saturday from 2:00 pm to 2:00 am and on Sunday from 2:00 pm to 1:00 am. (802) 644-6366.

If you'd like to put together your own beer and cheese tasting, visit the Smugglers' Country Store for all the necessary ingredients!

To accompany the following recipe, one of many available on [cabotcheese.coop](http://cabotcheese.coop), the cheese experts at Cabot suggests the full flavor of an imperial stout, with its distinctive notes of chocolate and dark coffee. Vermont breweries Long Trail and Otter Creek both offer imperial stouts.

### **Butternut squash, cranberry and Cabot habanero cheddar wontons**

#### **Ingredients:**

- 1 small butternut squash
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon grated nutmeg
- Salt and ground black pepper to taste
- 4 ounces Cabot Habanero Cheddar, grated (*about 1 cup*)
- 1 cup fresh cranberries, coarsely chopped
- 24 wonton skins
- 1 quart vegetable oil for frying

#### **Directions:**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Cut squash in half and remove seeds; sprinkle with cinnamon, nutmeg, salt and pepper.
3. Place cut-side-up in baking dish. Add 2 cups water and cover dish tightly with foil. Bake for 45 minutes, or until tender.
4. Scoop about 3/4 cup of flesh into mixing bowl, reserving rest for another use. Stir in cheese and cranberries. Season with salt and pepper, if needed.
5. Arrange wonton skins on work surface. Place about 1/2 tablespoon of filling in center of each. Brush two edges with water, fold in half to make triangle and press to seal.
6. In heavy saucepan or deep fryer, heat oil to 350°F; fry wontons in batches until golden brown.
7. Remove from oil and transfer to paper towels to drain. Serve warm with Sesame-Cranberry dipping sauce.

### **Sesame-Cranberry Dipping Sauce**

- ½ cup jellied cranberry sauce
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame seeds

Stir together all ingredients.

*Recipe courtesy of Chef Jeffrey Weiss (via [cabotcheese.coop](http://cabotcheese.coop))*