

NEWS

Work on Your 'Beer Bucket List' at Punk's Backyard Grill

Annapolis restaurant offers a class to give attendees a lesson on top beers to try.

By **Jennifer Batten** 12:00pm

Co-owners David McCabe and Sheila Laderberg of [Punk's Backyard Grill](#)



PHOTOS (5)



<http://greaterannapolis.patch.com/listings/punks-backyard-grill>)are passionate about beer. They love the challenge of finding new beer selections for their unique restaurant that recreates the experience of a classic American backyard cookout. Since Punk's opened two years ago in [Westfield Annapolis](#) (<http://greaterannapolis.patch.com/listings/westfield-annapolis-shopping-center>)mall, the beer selection has grown tremendously and exceeds even the display rack.

McCabe and Laderberg both get anxious if the same beers are out for more than three weeks. Between the two of them, favorites include a mix of lager, ale, India Pale Ale and stout.

Punk's sponsored an all-star beer class on Dec. 5, spurred by a list that *GQ* magazine (<http://www.gq.com/food-travel/wine-and-cocktails/201004/best-greatest-beers-in-the-world#slide=1>) published in April 2010 of the top 50 beers to try. Punk's carries quite a few of these beers that are a must-taste before you die. Consider this a "beer bucket list." Selections for the class included Weihenstephaner, Ommegang Hennepin, Schneider Aventinus, Hop Rod Rye and Samuel Smith's Oatmeal Stout.

With few ingredients needed to make a tasty brew, it's no wonder that beer is a craft that has stood the test of time.

"Great wine is grown and great beer is made," quoted McCabe.

While wine is dependent on growing grapes on good fertile land, beer isn't so picky and can be finessed into something magnificent depending on the ingredients and when they are added.

"What's the difference between a lager and a pilsner?" asked Nate Schmutz, who attended the class with his girlfriend, Kate Stadig, of Annapolis.

McCabe replied, "The base barley and malt types are different creating the two types of beer."

Schmutz, a member of the U.S. Army, is currently working on his master's degree at the University of Maryland. Having served abroad, Schmutz has some firsthand experience tasting German beers. He and Stadig both picked the same beer as their first choice during the tasting portion of the class: the Schneider Aventinus.

For Schmutz, the double-brewed Weizenbock brought to mind memories of beers tasted in Germany.

Weizenbock is a traditional springtime festival brew that was typically a Lenten beer. This particular beer has many notes and flavors with each sip. By using a three-stage mashing process, the flavors can be "layered" within one beer.

"With each sip, your palette expands and allows you to truly enjoy the complexity of the ale," Laderberg said. "Beer judges — unlike wine judges — swallow, their beer. It allows you to use the taste buds on the back of the tongue to reach the full potential of the beer."

Laderberg advised the group to think of lemons and pepper when tasting the Ommegang Hennepin, a Saison (pronounced "SIZE-on"), that can taste bitter at first but develops into an earthy taste that is subtle.

Note that the head on a Belgian beer is an important part of the tasting, leaving behind lacing which impacts each sip.

The classes offered by Punk's are a great way to beef up your beer knowledge and give you the chance to find some new drinks to present at your next party or gathering. Don't be scared to give a new beer a try.

Punk's offers \$3 beers during happy hour on Monday through Friday from 3 to 6 p.m. If you'd like a little more guidance and beer knowledge, Punk's will offer a class on Belgian beers (<http://greaterannapolis.patch.com/events/belgian-beer-class>) on Dec. 12 at 5 p.m.



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