

Chef Brian Owenby, Yazoo Brewery present Craft Food and Craft Beer Tasting at Southern Food & Wine Festival

August 3, 2009

The first to be held at the [Opryland Hotel](#), the Southern Food & Wine Festival was a great success. According to Kim Keelor, Director of Public Relations at Gaylord's Opryland Hotel in Nashville,

We felt the Food Network [Southern Food and Wine Festival](#) year was a great success, especially considering the fact that it was the first time we have undertaken such an expansive event with our Food Network partners. Our guests had positive comments and seemed to really enjoy it. The food culture is remarkably strong, evidenced by the popularity of the network and its celebrities, and the fact that we had guests attend the festival who drove from as far away as Abilene, Texas. We are looking into having a second festival next summer.

Approximately 7,000 guests attended the festival, and as far as I'm concerned, approximately 6,985 of the guests missed the best part. No offense to Alton Brown, the Neelys or Bobby or Jamie Deen, but the Craft Beers and Craft Foods event, held in a VIP room behind [Findley's Irish Pub](#), was the best part of the entire festival.

The food and beer event was capped at 40 people, but there were only approximately 15 people in attendance, including hosts Linus Hall, owner of [Yazoo Brewery](#), and his gracious and lovely wife, Lila. Chef [Brian Owenby](#), executive chef of the area of the resort known as The District, absolutely wowed us with his selections. Some of the meal pairings featured a dish and a beer designed to complement each other's flavor profiles, while other combinations were designed to show a contrast in flavor.

Passed Hors d'oeuvres

Most of us in the tasting were previously unknown to each other, so we modestly sampled the hors d'oeuvres. Modesty was gone with later courses as we happily devoured practically everything placed before us. Pimento cheese and Ritz crackers were served, as were deviled eggs with pulled pork and barbecued ham biscuits with raspberry jelly. This was paired with Yazoo's [Hefeweizen](#), which I have had before and thoroughly enjoy. Wonderful yeast and wheat, as well as banana flavors, are found on the nose and the palate,, and it is just an excellent hefeweizen. Excellent flavor and smooth and delicious.

First Course

Our first course consisted of a chicken liver and pork paté featuring cranberries, along with house made crackers and pickles. I've never had paté before, but it was quite good. I'm no food critic, so I'll spare you any review of the dish. It will suffice to say it was rich and creamy, and the richness was complimented by the richness of Yazoo's dark, richly brown [Sly Rye Porter](#). I had never tried this beer before, but I am a fan of porters, so I was eager. The first nose hit me and I was in love! I picked up dark plummy fruit and good slightly sweet and smoky maltiness. It was even better on the palate. You could really pick out the plummy fruit flavors, as well as some cherry and good, slightly smoky malty goodness. On a couple of sips I thought I picked up hints of chocolate as well. It was full bodied and had a crisp and very clean finish.

Second Course

The second course was a play on bacon and eggs. House cured pancetta was paired with a fried farm egg and romaine hearts. It's hard to mess up bacon and eggs, but judging by Chef Owenby's efforts, it's possible to make them terrific. This was paired with Yazoo's [Pale Ale](#). Their pale ale is their most popular beer. It features Amarillo hops, which give it more of a citrusy and grapefruit profile than beers using English hops. This is very clean and smooth pale ale and worked very well to cut through the

fat and richness of the bacon and eggs and cleanse the palate.

Third Course

The third course was a Pig Trotter Terrine served over lentils and topped with maché salad. ([Here is one recipe for the dish](#), to give you an idea of what it is, because I couldn't describe it accurately enough). This was very rich as well and was served with Yazoo's **Hop Project (#16)**. This IPA style beer had a very hoppy nose, full of juicy citrus and grapefruit. The taste was very dry, clean and floral, with hints of citrus and grapefruit.

Fourth Course

The fourth course was a Southern Style "[Porchetta](#)", served over braised greens, corn and heirloom tomatoes. This was very well seasoned with rosemary and perhaps cloves and the fat of the pork melted in your mouth. This was paired with Yazoo's [Dos Perros](#), which is a style of beer Linus Hall is accused of making up: Mexican Amber. It is made with chocolate malts and also features some flaked corn to make this a lighter bodied beer, despite it's rich dark color. This beer complemented the dish well, with corn in the dish and flaked corn in the beer.

Fifth (and final) Course

The fifth and final course was, of course, dessert. We were served a single scoop (by this time, any more would have been impossible to consume) of malted chocolate and hop ice cream. It was made with bitter chocolate and crushed Whoppers candy and was served with dark cherries. This was paired with Yazoo's new high gravity beer, **Sue**. Yes, a beer named Sue. A sort of homage to Johnny Cash? Sue is a smoked porter and is 7.5% ABV. The barley used in making the beer was smoked with cherry wood, which imparts good sweet and tart flavors to the beer. The beer has a mildly smoky nose and is quite smoky on the palate. I have only had one other smoky beer before (Rogue's Smoke Ale) and hated it. I had reservations about this beer, and while I don't know if I'll ever try it again or not, it is a very well crafted beer, and was a great complement to the ice cream and a good beer with which to end the tasting.

Overall

As a beer lover and self-designated beer snob, this was an amazing experience. The food and beer in and of themselves was amazing, but having it all with Linus Hall of Yazoo made it even better. My eternal gratitude to Chef Brian Owenby, Director of Public Relations Kim Keelor, and Linus and Lila Hall for making this event possible. The whole event blew me away and I can't thank them enough. Should they offer this event next year, I encourage everyone reading this to make reservations as early as possible and plan on attending. The cost was \$65 per person, and I don't believe anyone in attendance would argue with me when I say it was worth far more than that.

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