

AN UNLIKELY COUPLE

PAIRING CHOCOLATE AND BEER

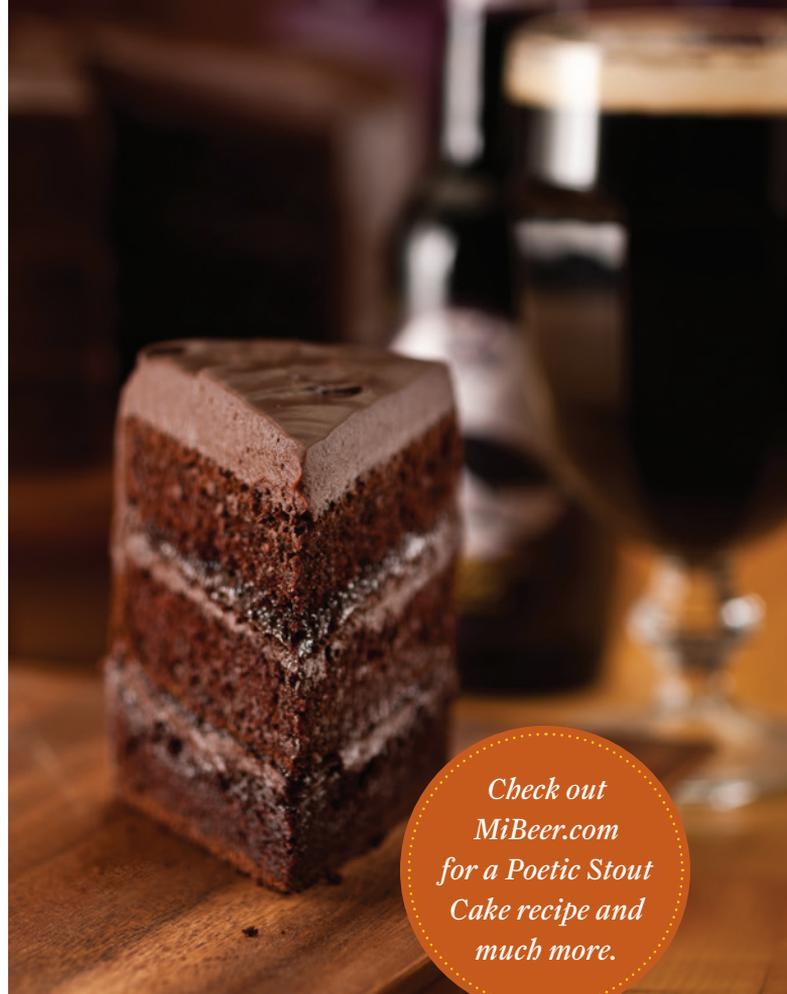
By Fred Bueltmann

There's instant chemistry when you see them. Deep, alluring character draws you in — attitude brings you back for more. There's softness, but sometimes you like it rough. Some describe sweetness, but you know the whole story. When you get a taste, you might feel comfort, intrigue, or halting arousal from intense assertiveness. Yes, I'm talking about beer and chocolate.

There's so much harmony and synergy between the two. If you start with stouts, the parallels are simple yet dramatic. Stouts feature roasty tones from dark barley-malt, that emulate the edgy roastiness in dark chocolate. There's typically a soft, sweet center in both as well, framed by the robust character that slows us down and evokes that deep breath after your first sip or bite.



So forget whatever you've heard about other beverages and chocolate. I'm here to tell you that pairing beer and chocolate is the bomb! You can start simple and pick dark stouts and porters that feature chocolate-like tones — or even find beers that actually include chocolate, which drives the point home even more. The energy between the similar, complementary flavors is the chocoholic's dream. The bigger the chocolate, the bigger the beer — so save the Imperial Stouts for the big boys. Dive in, submerge, enjoy.



Check out MiBeer.com for a Poetic Stout Cake recipe and much more.

Another fun direction: Take a page out of a pastry chef's or candy-maker's playbook and look for typical contrasting or complementary flavors we already love. Think about desserts built around chocolate. What flavors come into play? Caramel, nuts, vanilla, toffee, molasses ... sound familiar? They're also all abundantly available in beer. The strikingly rich caramel tones in barleywines and wheatwines are killer against big, intense chocolates. And if the dessert or chocolate is garnished with sea salt? Kaboom! It's an explosion of flavors.

If you're choosing chocolates that are more medium-bodied, be careful not to overwhelm them. Look for beers that match in intensity. It's a nice time to think about nutty brown ales, which often feature nice sweet malt character and tones of caramel, while not as assertive or bold as the big 'uns.

So, if you're looking to show your love, impress a date, or just set the mood, order a beer with your chocolate dessert. Keep it classy and skip the pint glass, sharing smaller pours in stemware, and enjoy! 🍷

Fred Bueltmann is a managing partner in New Holland Brewing and past president of the Michigan Brewers Guild. He is the author of The Beervangelist's Guide to the Galaxy, which is slated to publish in 2013 (beervangelist.net). He has received the Guild's "Tom Burns Award" recognizing the pioneering spirit of the Great Beer State.