

# GREAT TASTES PAIRING BEER **AND** CHEESE

By Fred Bueltmann

The secret's out: Beer is an incredibly versatile beverage to pair with food. Its range of flavor cannot be topped by other beverages. The depth of flavor found in Michigan beers abounds with options — whether you're looking for caramel notes to complement a dish, a brightly bitter counterpoint with tones of citrus, or a fruity ester to round out a meal.

Cheese, a deliciously fermented counterpart to beer, is a flavorful example to enjoy and experiment with. Bright, clean lagers or kolschs play with the subtleties of manchego and other white cheeses. Malty tones from ambers and browns pull forward a creaminess or nutty character from semi-hard

cow's milk cheeses, or counter the rich tanginess of goat's milk cheeses. An IPA's citrus-forward, hoppy flavor provides wonderful contrast to the sharp, bold tones of aged cheddars. Stouts and porters are a luxurious backdrop for creamy, rich soft-ripened cheeses. Even formidable blues and aged blues find harmony with Imperial IPAs and Imperial Stouts.

Artisan cheese, a piece of fresh bread, and a well-chosen beer takes your picnic, tasting, or meal from nourishing to sublime. Below are several Michigan cheeses, along with some guidelines on beer styles to pair with them. While I offer examples and guidelines, I encourage you to look at this playfully, rather than as a complicated match-game. Open your mind to incoming flavors and experiment; it's part of the fun. With beer and cheese, there's wonderful synergy between their flavors, so it's pretty hard to go wrong.

The Michigan Brewers Guild currently boasts more than 90 member breweries (visit [MiBeer.com](http://MiBeer.com) for details, plus more about beer/food pairings, including recipes). The Michigan Cheese Maker's Cooperative ([greatlakesgreatcheese.com](http://greatlakesgreatcheese.com)) will direct you to about a dozen Michigan cheese makers. 🧀

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## Michigan Beer & Michigan Cheese Suggestions

Cheese	Cheese Style	Beer Style	Tasting
Evergreen Lane: Chevre (Goat)	Fresh	Amber Ale, Bock, Amber Lager	Tangy and slightly nutty, chevre brightens ambers and other malt-forward beers; malt frames the cheese nicely.
Zingerman's: Detroit Brick (Goat with Peppercorn)	Fresh	Saison, Tripel, Hefe-Weizen	Dense and crumbly, with a peppercorn perfume. Big enough for bright, bold beers with complex sweet and spicy profiles.
Evergreen Lane: Aged goat's milk cheddar	Semi-soft	Porter, Oatmeal Stout	Slightly salty with a firm, creamy body. Roast will contrast the cheddar tones instead of hops to avoid losing the goat character.
Grassfield's: Gouda	Semi-soft	Amber Ale, Bock, Amber Lager	Creamy and nutty. Choose beers with caramel tones and avoid overt bitterness.
Leelanau Cheese: Raclette	Semi-soft	Kolsch, Helles, Light Lager	The cheese's mild, earthy tones call for similarly subtle beers. Bring light malt character with low hop profile.
Leelanau Cheese: Raclette with Peppercorn	Semi-soft	Saison, Hefe-Weizen	Spicy fermentation profiles play off the zippy, bright peppercorn note, but keep the raclette character intact.
Grassfield's: Lamont Cheddar	Semi-hard	Stout, Porter, IPA	Rich cheddar, with hints of salt, not too sharp. Does well with hops or roast; an IPA works, as does any stout or porter.
Zingerman's: Manchester (double-cream, cow)	Soft-ripened	Amber Lager, Abbey Ale	Sweet, soft and pleasantly musty. Benefits from caramel malt tones, but stick with medium-body beers to enjoy the cow's milk flavor at its best.
Evergreen Lane: LaMancha Moo! (cow)	Soft-ripened	Oatmeal Stout, Stout, Porter	Silky-smooth creaminess, complex aroma; soft, rich payoff inside. Stouts and porters make wonderful friends.
Evergreen Lane: Poet's Tomme	Washed-rind	Amber Ale	Washed in The Poet oatmeal stout. Body has a delicate creaminess; rind adds nutty, roasty tones. Good with its aging partner, the cheese opens up more with a balanced amber ale.
Grassfield's: Polkston Corners	Blue	IPA, Pale, Porter	Moderately strong blue requiring a beer with backbone, but don't overpower it. Hops and roast both contrast well.