

# Liquid sweets for your sweet

What's Brewing  
JOSH RUBIN

Beer and passion aren't usually found in the same sentence.

Thanks to Heritage Brewing, they can now be found in the same bottle.

The Carleton Place, Ont., microbrewery just released its Passion Brew for the second year — just in time for Valentine's Day.

The timing isn't coincidental. Nor, for that matter, is the big red heart painted on the label, and the addition of passion fruit concentrate.

"We think it really fits in well at this time of year," says Heritage sales manager Donna Warner.

Some fruit beers, particularly Belgian style ones with a sour lambic base, can be very refreshing. Refreshing, however, isn't the first word that springs to mind with this beer.

Like the candy people often give to their sweethearts on Valentine's Day, this beer is more than a little bit sweet. Okay — it's really sweet.

So how did a tropical fruit that tends to be quite tart end up being so sugary tasting in this pinkish brew? It's not through the addition of any actual sugar, Warner assures.

"Any time you boil something down, the natural sugars are going to get concentrated," she points out. She concedes that Passion Brew is a little sweeter than some drinkers might like. Part of the reason it was made that way is simply circumstance. Since its founding in 2000, Heritage has specialized in lagers, so it used a lager as the base beer for this brew.

"Most people who make a fruit beer use a wheat ale as the base, which tends to be a little bit sour," Warner explains. "We know lagers, so that's what we used."

The passion fruit concentrate is added after the beer is made. This gives it a wonderful passion fruit aroma and a syrupy passion fruit flavour. Adding it before fermentation would tone down some of the sweetness, but Heritage decided against it because the beer would have simply gotten too strong.

"The (natural) sugars in the concentrate would have fermented and we'd have a really



high alcohol beer on our hands. And that wasn't what we were going for with this," Warner says.

What they were going for was something that would draw in the non-beer drinkers. "This is really aimed at the opposite end of the market from the beer snobs," admits Warner.

Not that Heritage Brewing would mind it if beer snobs chose to drink it as well, of course.

**WHERE TO BUY IT:** LCBO

**PRICE:** \$4.95 per 650-millilitre bottle.

**FOOD PAIRING:** Angel food cake, crème brûlée, zabaglione.

**THE VERDICT:** If sweet and fruity's your thing, this beer is it. But drink a small glass, not the whole bottle, or you might get a serious sugar rush. Might be better made with juice rather than concentrate.

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# Beer savvy tips

So the LCBO and The Beer Store don't carry your favourite beer. Whatever is a dedicated suds drinker to do?

► Private order. Ask the LCBO if there's an Ontario agent for the beer you're looking for. If there is, you'll be referred to the agent, who will then let you know about the price, delivery time and minimum order requirements.

If there isn't an agent, the LCBO will get in touch with the brewery on your behalf and find out if it's willing to fill your order. The more you're planning to order, the more likely it is the brewery will be willing to sell. Quite often, 60 cases is the smallest order a brewery will fill. If you don't have any beer-loving friends who want to help bump up the size of your order, try Bartowel.com, a site run by and for Toronto beer geeks. Bar Towel readers have collaborated on private orders in the past.

Be warned, though — there's no guarantee a brewery will want to deal with a private order. Also, it often takes months for private orders to go through.

**Contact:** lcbo.com,

psrequests@lcbo.com, 416-864-6739; 1-800-668-5144.

► Watch the stores. Sometimes, private orders (or consignment orders, which aren't paid for in advance) are brought in, but the customer's cheque bounces or something else goes wrong, and the beer isn't sold. In that case, the LCBO can put it up for sale at one of its stores — usually in very limited quantities.

► South of the border. Head to the Buffalo suburb of Kenmore, N.Y., where Premier Gourmet regularly stocks more than 700 beers from around the world. You have to be gone from Canada for at least 48 hours before you're allowed to bring any alcohol back across the border.

**Contact:** Premier Gourmet (premiergourmet.com), 3465 Delaware Ave., Kenmore, N.Y. (716) 877-3574.

► On eBay. If you're a gambler, go the online route. Lots of rare beers are for sale on eBay. Importing them is illegal, so all that beer (and money) could go down the drain if the delivery gets opened up by the fine folks at Customs.

JOSH RUBIN

## Drinkers Feverish with excitement

You'd think club-goers looking for love in all the latest hotspots wouldn't require extra stimulation. Then along comes Fever.

There's a lot of heavy breathing in the marketing world about this new "libido stimulant beverage." News releases claim it will "enhance sexual performance and pleasure, and reduce recovery time between sexual intervals." Recipes for Fever cocktails like the Moantini and Hottie Toddy have also arrived in my email basket. As for the feverusa.com website, I'm more bothered than hot about the risqué photos of party girls and Timberlake wannabes.

So what's causing all this sup-

posed stimulation? Eight herbs, from goat weed to ginseng to green tea caffeine.

The ginger and vanilla flavoured drink comes in 14-ounce canisters. It was launched last fall in U.S. nightclubs and bars, and has spread to supermarkets and natural food stores. It won't officially cross the border until spring. Meanwhile, a 12-pack is \$35 (U.S.) online, but shipping to Canada doubles the cost.

It's been a month since I was promised a sample of Fever to test, yet I'm still waiting for satisfaction. When I do get my hands on some, I'll report back — if I'm not too busy.

SUSAN SAMPSON



## You can have your heart and eat it, too

We've rediscovered the romance in pasta thanks to a Woodbridge shop. Only Pasta Inc. makes heart-shaped pillows that are a hit at valentine dinners and weddings. They're \$9.99 a pound.

The shop has been getting creative with shapes and flavours for a dozen years. Besides the usual lasagnes and raviolis, it makes bells and Christmas tree shapes. Sachetti, cute little pasta bags cinched at the top with spinach fettuccine, go in the oven. So do rotolo, which look like slices of jellyroll. If you're trolling for squid ink pasta, this is one place to find some. Newest additions to the product line are organic pastas made with spelt and kamut.

"We're open to many suggestions here," says co-owner Domenic Pede, who works with

chefs and caterers as well as selling to the public.

Some of the pastas may be novelty items, but there's nothing gimmicky about their construction. Our testers found satisfaction in the al dente dough and the straightforward fillings, as well as the classic bottled sauces such as Creamy Tomato and Tomato Basil. We liked way the pastas held their shape after boiling, too.

Sold fresh and frozen, Only Pastas are made on the premises, with wholesome ingredients and no additives. (Details: 905-856-4499 or onlypasta.ca.) Wild mushroom, crab, and feta and black olive are among the more unusual fillings, but ricotta and spinach is super-popular. That's what our hearts were filled with.

SUSAN SAMPSON

## When all else fails, order pizza

It will be love at first bite for those who shun lingerie and chocolate today. Boston Pizza expects to make more than 50,000 heart-shaped pizzas today and it will give \$1 to the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada for each one sold.

This is the 15th year the chain has made the valentine pies. It hopes to raise \$300,000. Since 1993, Boston Pizza has raised more than \$1.4 million to support heart and stroke research in Canada.

"Our guests have shown they have a special place in their hearts for our heart-shaped pizzas," says Boston Pizza Interna-



tional president Mark Pacinda. "In fact, we sell more pizzas on Valentine's Day than any other day of the year."

Who knew?

## CALENDAR

**VALENTINE EATS:** Rice Bar in Kensington Market is concocting a lovely Valentine's Day dinner for \$80 per couple (or \$60 without wine). It starts with a glass of cava with a dash of pineapple soju, followed by arugula salad with toasted garlic and grape tomatoes or Corn 4 Ways (cheese grits topped with a corn salsa, served with corn tortillas and Mexican truffle). A glass of organic wine is followed by Truffled Risotto (with parmigiano-reggiano and walnuts served with flat-iron steak or tiger shrimp) or beet ravioli (roasted organic beets, fennel, shallots and orange zest with a coconut-lemongrass sauce and topped with pistachios and "sake drunk dried cherries"), or snapper fillet with a green tea oyster chowder, organic potatoes and rapini. Dessert is rice pudding or chocolate pudding cake with a white chocolate foam. Rice Bar is at 319 Augusta Ave. To reserve: 416-922-7423, ricebar.ca.

**LUNCH MONEY:** For those who have cash left over after Valentine's Day, consider donating your lunch money to Second Harvest next Thursday. Look for Lunch Money Day volunteers at 13 subway stations. More than 200 companies and schools will run campaigns. Starbucks will donate \$1 for every salad or sandwich purchased. The money raised will help Second Harvest continue to pick up fresh food, which would have gone to waste, and deliver it to 240 social service programs in Toronto. To run a lunch money campaign at your office or school, call 416-408-2594. You can also donate at secondharvest.ca.

**LUNAR NEW YEAR:** A Taste of the World offers Asian Lunar New Year tours in Chinatown on Feb. 16, 17, 18, 23, 24 and 25 plus March 3 and 4 from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Founder Shirley Lum will guide small groups on the cultural, historical and food tour to celebrate the New Year of the Pig on Feb. 18. Tours include sampling Chinese and Taiwanese symbolic New Year snacks, shopping for ingredients to cook a New Year feast, visiting a Chinese/Taiwanese bakery for New Year pastries and savouring a hosted New Year dim sum feast. Price: adults \$39, seniors (65+)/students \$35, children \$25. Contact: 416-923-6813 or torontowalksbikes.com.

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