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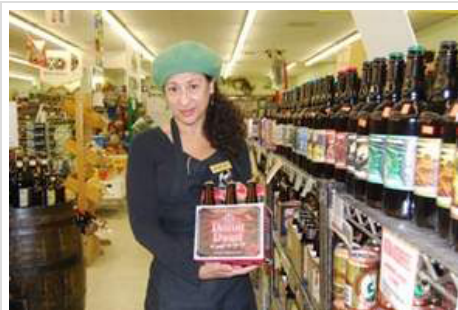
WEB EXCLUSIVE: Not your grandpa's beer

By Gabe Nelson

With craft brewing on the rise, today's beer drinkers face a diverse array of styles and flavors — just knowing the difference between **Stroh's** and **Schlitz** won't cut it anymore. Allen Park resident Annette May, 50, a veteran of the beer industry and manager of the beer department at **Merchant's Fine Wine** in Dearborn, offered *Crain's* some tips on becoming an expert.

How to pick: The trendiest beers in the craft brewing world today are heavily hopped India Pale Ales and "imperial" brews, which offer higher alcohol content and more powerful flavors, but those aren't usually popular among novices. May says people trying to discover good beer should consult an expert at a local store. "Once they get to know you, they're going to know what you like," she said, but first, "you have to know what you like to drink."

How to serve: Whether the beer comes in a can or a bottle, always pour it into a glass. "You lose the aroma straight away if you drink it out of a bottle," May says. Skilled servers pour beer smoothly but not so smoothly it doesn't foam, because beer needs to interact with air to release its scent and reach peak flavor. "If you pour it really gingerly, that's not going to happen," she said.



Annette May, manager of the beer department at Merchant's Fine Wine in Dearborn, holds a six-pack of Detroit Dwarf lager, made by Detroit microbrewery Detroit Beer Co. The store stocks beers from 19 breweries and microbreweries in Michigan.

Photo credit: Crain's Detroit Business

How to drink: "It's a little like assessing a glass of wine," said May, who picks her beer based on what she's eating. She examines the bottle, color and scent before taking her first sip. "I have a nice whiff and get all those malty, hoppy, spicy, yeasty aromas, depending on what the beer is. And then I taste it."

How to learn: May became a certified cicerone, the beer equivalent of a sommelier, through the Chicago-based Craft Beer Institute. About 45 people have achieved the rank so far, with the first master cicerone exam scheduled for November. Beer enthusiasts can also become certified beer servers by passing an online exam, which costs \$49. To sign up for an exam or to view sample questions, visit cicerone.org.