



Serious Drinker

By Rebecca Hurvitz

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Michigan's Certified Beer Expert

"It is so unique and fragrant because it's brewed with ginger, lemon grass and peppercorns. A wonderful and unique beer. And think of the food pairings ... Asian, Thai or a summer salad."

This is how Annette May of Allen Park describes one of Michigan's most exotic beers, Nicey Spicey, made by Short's brewery in Bellaire. And when May speaks highly of a beer you trust her. May was the first woman to become a Certified Cicerone, and she remains one of the select few people who hold this title in Michigan.



To become a Cicerone is no easy feat. Those who achieve this beer-expert status have undergone rigorous exams and have proven advanced knowledge in brewing ingredients and the brewing process, food pairing, tastings, flavors, beer styles, culture, storage plus sales and service. "I have been working in the beer business for a long time," says May. "I pride myself on my expertise and knowledge. I became certified to test myself and to create credibility as someone who understands how complex the world of food and beer is."

She shares her passion for beer with customers at Merchant's Fine Wine in Dearborn, where she is the resident brew guru. And she's in The Pink Boot Society, a group that encourages women to become active in the beer industry.

She knows a good sip when she has one, and thinks highly of many ales, stouts and porters that Michigan breweries are producing. "We are on the scale for the number of craft breweries in the state and people around the country and overseas are taking notice."

Many Michigan breweries are using local ingredients to create a regional influence. "Founder's (Grand Rapids) makes a beer with Michigan cherries," says May. Also, Bell's (Kalamazoo) is creating a Christmas Ale brewed with Michigan-grown hops and malt.

Michigan brewers are also creating new brewing practices. Ron Jeffrey of Jolly Pumpkin Brewery is pioneering open fermentation and oak aging. "He's doing something no one in the country is doing," says May. With so many Michigan craft beers on the market, it's a challenge to know where to start your tasting adventure. May suggests Bell's Expedition Stout, a classic, to begin the journey. "It's the most extraordinary style of Imperial stout and has been around for years." So start drinking up, Michigan. There is a huge world of beer ... right in your own backyard. | **RDW**

Annette May's Beer and Food Pairing Suggestions

As a Certified Cicerone, Annette May understands the importance of a great food and beer pairing. She suggests these culinary combinations for RDW readers:

1. A smoked beer with barbeque of any kind.
2. A German wheat beer with eggs.
3. A Belgian Brown Ale with beef stew.
4. Schwarz beer (a German-style beer) with cheese cake.
5. Belgian Gueuze with mussels.