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Mid Valley Pairing Event

It is certainly true that beer goes with food. In this day and age, wine no longer dominates the forefront of people's mind when it comes to pairing food and drink. Even the average beer consumer can certainly see that there is no better brother to cheese or fish, in the liquid family, than that of beer. In the Willamette Valley, we can certainly see that truth in the form of The Mid-Valley Pairing Event held on June 24th at the Willamette Heritage Center.

From four local craft breweries, three local food venues, and one cidery came 11 food and beverage pairings that have a substantial impact on the local culture. There came within the crowd a mix of both old and young alike. If they came for the atmosphere of the historic location, the varying bands of high skill, or the brewer and chef resolve... who can say? It is certainly true though, that a good time was had by all.

I was privileged enough to partake in four of these pairings; choosing one such pairing from each local brewery. These breweries were Seven Brides (Silverton), Oakshire (Eugene), Gilgamesh (Turner), and Pale Horse (Salem). For the providers of food I had Venti's Taphouse, Continental Delight, and Loustic Catering.

The first pairing I had was Oakshire's Line Dry Rye, pale ale, paired with a braised pork masala over fried pita from Venti's. First off, this was a fantastic pairing. The citrus from the hops and from the fruit in the masala complimented each other. The slight bitterness from the hops gave the slight heat from the food a good kick-up and vice versa. The bitterness also helped to cut through any of the sweetness of the sauce. There was a solid golden body within the brew here and this accentuated the pita bread and the breadiness of the noodles.

The second and third pairings I had were the Gilgamesh's flagship Mamba with the shrimp Madagascar from Continental and the Pale Horse Hopyard Dog with Loustic's Cassoulet. The Mamba is a hopless brew with tangerine peel, honey, and black tea beer. It was paired with a creamy dish cooked with wine. The Hopyard Dog was paired with a Cassoulet made with kidney beans, bacon, and spiced sausage was made popular in France.

The last pairing I partook in was a true and iconic classic. The Seven Brides Weizenator doppelbock put together with a skewered pearl onion and bratwurst dish from Venti's. The doppelbock gave great notes of raisins and a rich dark fruit flavor. The saltiness of the meat put off a fantastic compliment to the fruit. The saltiness of the meat, the spiciness of the onion, and the sweetness of the brew came together to form a perfect union to be etched in the history books. I was reminded of the autumn leaves and threatening snow.

For those who love a multi-course dinner of food and beer pairing, there could be no greater joy than choosing your own path in consumption. This being the first year that this event has been hosted I can only hope that we will see many more of its kind, and many more brew dishes to come.