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BEER



Head brewer Alex Tonello at New Helvetia's brewery. PHOTO BY REID FOWLER

Eat, Drink and Be Merry

up to the decadence oozing out, but won't overpower the delicateness of the pastry."

Salad: Spring mix with olives and fresh mandarins, rosemary and parsley, in a white wine and honey dressing. Pair with an IPA like New Helvetia's Nobody Cries on a Jet Ski.

"This allows you to pair the freshest beer on tap with the freshest local produce," he said. "The peppery flavor of the greens matches the intensity of the beer, which has a 45 IBU (on the bitterness scale)."

Entrée: Butternut squash gnocchi in browned butter and sage with toasted pecans and braised pork. Pair with a Belgium tripel (New Helvetia's new one is on tap).

"My family is Italian ... and my mom cooks the potatoes and rices them, and my sister and I roll it out," Tonello said. "The savory sweetness of the dish cuts down the tripel, and the higher alcohol stands up to the braised pork."

Dessert: Sea-salted chocolate peanut toffee clusters. Pair with a Russian stout, like the peanut-brittle-inspired stout New Helvetia is brewing now.

"It's 13 percent alcohol," he said. "It pairs well for obvious reasons – we put in a massive amount of lightly toasted nuts."

BY THEA MARIE ROOD

New Helvetia Brewing Company, 1730 Broadway, Sacramento, 916-469-9889, newhelvetiabrew.com. Look for the return of New Helvetia's backyard hops growing project, HIMBY, this spring.

Want to uber-impress your guests this year? Pair local craft beer with fresh, seasonal food.

Alex Tonello, head brewer at New Helvetia Brewing Company, is uniquely qualified to give this advice. "I worked at a wine bar in San Luis Obispo and learned food and wine pairing," said the Roseville native, who took that palate with him when he moved into the world of craft beer – first at Knee Deep Brewing Company for four years, and now at New Helvetia. "Wine is historically paired with food, but honestly, beer works even better than wine."

Appetizer: Baked brie topped with pan-fried pancetta in puff pastry and an ale-apple glaze. Pair with a red ale like Molly American, New Helvetia's flagship beer (also use it in the glaze).

"Hands-down this is my favorite appetizer to make – and you will eat it all and there's a good chance of ruining your dinner," Tonello said with a laugh. "The beer is soft but has enough body to stand

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