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Fundraiser in Mystic brings beer and baseball together again

[Tim Cotter](#)

In the 1880s, the American Association was known as The Beer and Whiskey League, since some of the teams were backed by breweries and distilleries and, unlike in the competing National League, fans were allowed to drink while watching the games.

Thus began a long partnership between beer and baseball.

Years later, Curt Gowdy would call out "Hi Neighbor, Have a Gansett" during Red Sox games, and Bernie the Brewer would slide into a huge mug of beer after each home run in Milwaukee, which considered itself the Beer Capital of the World.

The marriage has had its troubles, too. A 10-cent beer night at a Cleveland Indians game in the 1970s was ended because of a riot, and, of course, some of the Red Sox players in 2012 didn't wait until the game was over before cracking open a few.

Last week, beer and baseball came together at the Mystic Boathouse restaurant with spectacular results. Don Benoit, who calls himself "an old beer guy who loves baseball," organized a beer dinner to benefit the Mystic Schooners, the amateur summer league team that plays its home games at Fitch High School in Groton. The Schooners made the playoffs in their third season, and GM Dennis Long told the beer dinner crowd that the Mystic area has proved to be a big draw for the college-age players who come here from all over the country.

On this night, the Schooners shared the field with beers from Grey Sail Brewing of Westerly and the Willimantic Brewing Co.

Brewer/owner David Wollner is like the old veteran who has had Tommy John surgery but can still sling it: He has been putting out outstanding beers since he opened his Willimantic brewpub in 1997.

Alan and Jennifer Brinton are the rookies who came onto the scene with a big splash: They opened Grey Sail on Canal Street in Westerly in 2011.

There aren't any hard and fast rules in pairing beer with food, other than the obvious idea that they should complement each other, with one not overpowering the flavors of the other.

The event kicked off with Grey Sail Flagship Ale and baked brie. The sweetness of the malt in the cream ale worked well with the apricot jam served with the cheese.

In the second course of a beef slider with Grey Sail Flying Jenny, the beer's bitterness was countered nicely by a sage mayonnaise.

Curried fish bites and Willimantic's Pushing The Envelope were up next. This was another great beer by Wollner, and the hop level (about 75 IBUs) had no trouble keeping up with the bite of the sriracha and curry.

The main course was a beef and sausage stew paired with Willimantic Colonial Ale. Wollner explained how he used smoked wheat, molasses and two British-style hops, Goldings and Clusters, to make this drinkable ale.

IF YOU GO **Mystic Boathouse**

8 Coogan Blvd., Mystic

Open 7 days for lunch and dinner.

www.themysticboathouse.com

Grey Sail Brewing

63 Canal St., Westerly

Tours and tastings: Saturdays, 1-4 p.m.

greysailbrewing.com

Willimantic Brewing

967 Main St., Willimantic

Open 7 days for dinner, and daily for lunch except Mondays.

www.willimanticbrewingcompany.com

Mystic Schooners

Go to schoonersbaseball.com for schedule and information on how to host a player.

Those who are still surprised by how well beer and dessert go together have never sat down with a Grey Sail Leaning Chimney porter and a flourless chocolate torte. Together, they turned the double play.

It was no surprise that Grey Sail and Willimantic stepped up to the plate to help out the Schooners as both breweries have a history of community involvement. The Brintons and their brewer, Josh Letourneau, raised money for storm-damaged Misquamicut beach through sales of Bring Back the Beach Blonde Ale. Wollner brewed Colonial Ale as a fundraiser for the Windham Textile & History Museum. And the Boathouse is one of the bigger sponsors of the Schooners.

The well-crafted beers of these two local breweries and the always great food coming out of the Boathouse kitchen were nothing short of a home run.

"It's really the best time to be a beer drinker," Wollner said.

Especially with baseball season approaching.

MYSTIC BOATHOUSE CURRIED FISH BITES

2 quarts Blue Point Toasted Lager

3 1/2 cups Fish Chic Batter (available at fish markets)

2 tablespoons toasted curry powder (see recipe below)

Fresh cod cut in 1 inch chunks

Whisk together beer, batter and curry powder. Dunk fish chunks in mixture and fry in 2 inches of hot oil until crispy and golden brown.

Serve with sriracha aioli (recipe below).

For toasted curry powder: Heat curry powder in saute pan over low to medium heat until aromatic and slightly darker in color

SRIRACHA AIOLI

2 cups mayo

1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice

1/2 teaspoon fresh garlic

pinch salt and pepper

1 1/2 tablespoon sriracha

Combine in food processor until smooth.
