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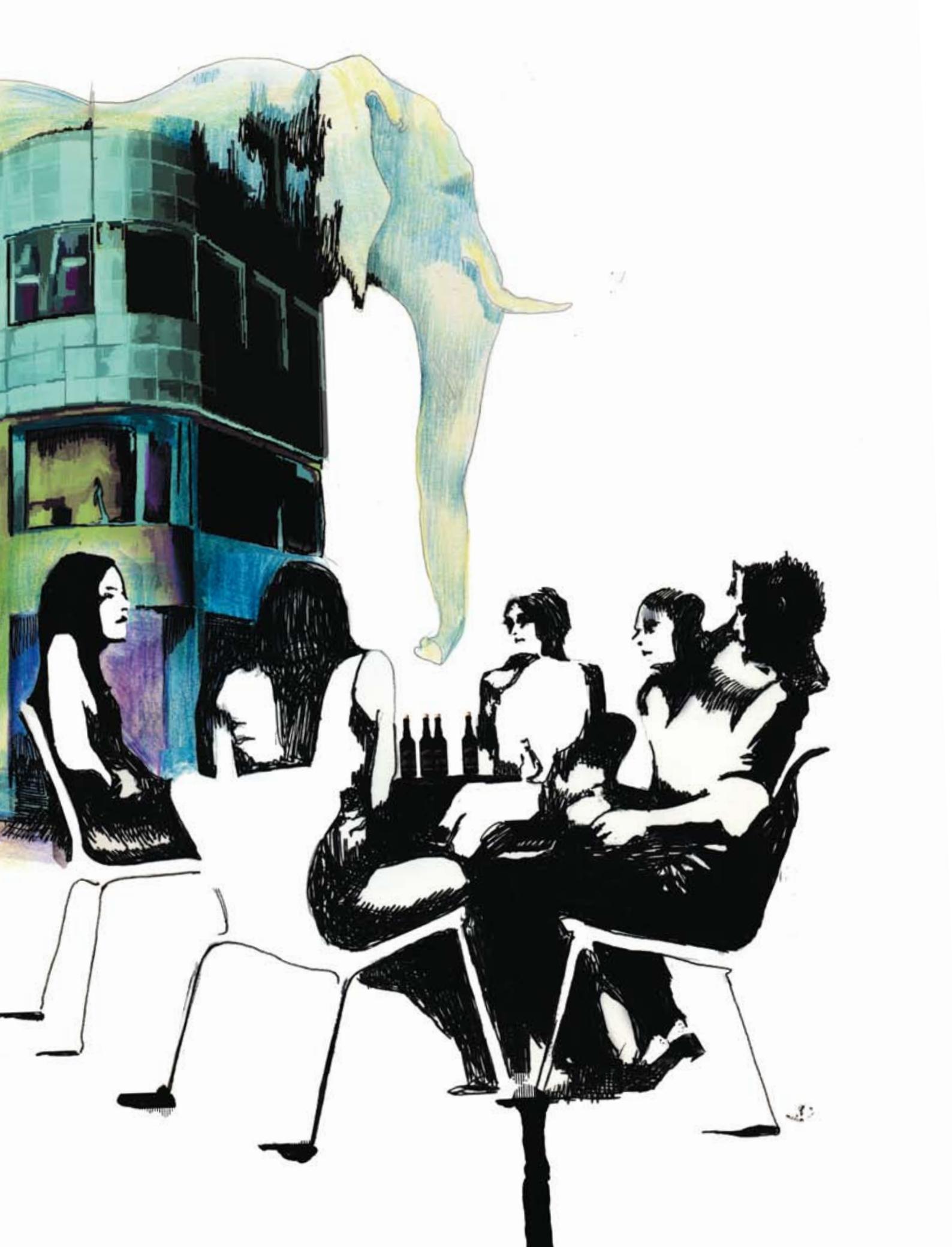
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THE ULTIMATE BEER EXPERIENCE

Beer is to the Dane as sake is to the Japanese. It is a defining element of Danish culture and probably the best part of a Danish lunch. And beer is not just a main staple of the Danish diet for drinking on its own. It's becoming fashionable to eat as a key ingredient in cuisine, as well as together with non-traditional fare. In addition, a recent boom in beer making is sweeping through the country and bars, brewpubs and restaurants around Copenhagen are offering a wider variety of beer than ever before.





By Laura Stadler-Jensen
Illustration: Naja Conrad

Today, more than 80 microbreweries and 12 traditional breweries produce more than 700 million liters and sell more than 7,000 million liters of beer annually giving Denmark the lead for having the most breweries per capita than anywhere else in the world, according to the Danish Beer Enthusiasts and the Danish Brewers Association. This is remarkable seeing that there were only 12 just eleven years ago.

As an American, I am more accustomed to drinking beer with peanuts or viewing beer as something you drink while watching a football game or barbequing. The difference in Danish beer culture is far more serious and the gastronomical exploration of pairing beer and food is even more bewildering. The history of beer in Denmark dates back to the Iron Age and is cited widely in tales of the Vikings and Nordic mythology. In fact, some say the English word "ale" derived from the Nordic Viking word for bitter, "aul(t)", which was altered when adopted in the British Isles.

Now it is known as "øl" and is clearly the preferred drink of most Danes, especially

those sitting along the canals on a warm summer day. Having a "håndbajer", or "a beer in the hand", on Nyhavn is a favorite pastime that has existed since the old days when sailors would come in and out of the harbor to buy and sell goods. Pilsner has been the most popular beer type in Denmark and Denmark's most well known brew, Carlsberg, owner of both Carlsberg and Tuborg brews, is still standard option in most bars and restaurants. Ordering a "stor fadøl" or large draft is a classic tradition that anyone visiting Copenhagen should not miss.

Many visitors find it difficult to choose between Tuborg or Carlsberg and opinions run strong about which is better, however if you want to know the difference, both are pilsners, with Carlsberg having more of a bitter taste and fruity flavor with an essence of apple and pine, while Tuborg is a pale lager with more acidity and citrus taste. For a more sophisticated pallet, Carlsberg's newer range of specialty beers under the Jacobsen brand, in honor of founding father, Jacob Christian Jacobsen launched in 2005, were crafted together with culinary experts in Copenhagen in an aim to create beer specifically for enjoying with food.

The idea of using beer in food is not new. Grilling, baking, basting, glazing, and marinating are



just some examples. Some could even say beer is food. It's also a drink of choice for enjoying together with gourmet cuisine that is carefully paired to bring out subtle flavors like fine wine. The thought is that the range of flavors offered by both beer and food such as bitter, salty, sour and sweet can complement, contrast, and enhance flavors and spices.

It's well known that beer is a better choice for spicy Asian and Indian dishes, and it's also standard with Scandinavian fare such as pickled herring, pork roast, and other dishes that need the acidity of the beer to cut through the fatty food and sauces. Now it's expanding and served with food types from all over the world and particularly with food derived from traditional wine-producing countries.

Perhaps the most popular brewpub and restaurant leading the beer/food pairing craze at the moment is Nørrebro Bryghus. It was among the first brewpubs to open in Copenhagen in 2003 and brews up to 20,000 liters of beer per month with 12 varieties on offer. My husband, Lasse Fredrik Jensen who is the executive chef at the American Embassy restaurant, and I sat down with the master brewer, Anders Kissmeyer to learn about what makes the beer and concept at Nørrebro Bryghus so special, and his executive chef Anna Grethe Berg Madsen shed some light on beer pairing.

Eleven different kinds of beer were presented each with name card, color and distinction. Anders explained his personal touch, such as home alder-smoked malt and up to 30 different kinds of malt and hops, and yeast cultures imported from San Diego, California are what set the beer apart. The American inspiration doesn't stop there. A special summer brew, crafted by the American brew master from Brooklyn Brewery called Pacific Summer Ale, can be sampled through August. Water purification, minerals and a classical approach to beer making, as well as experimental methods give tasters the chance to take a ride on the brewer's quest for the ideal beer for the food, occasion or mood.

Chef Anna Grethe Berg Madsen's philosophy for beer pairing is that the food has to be spicy, have lots of flavor and challenge the beer. A rule of thumb is light foods like fish, vegetables and soups should be paired with light beers like pilsner or wheat. Medium to darker meats like lamb and poultry go well with lager or red and darker, more powerful dishes like glazed or smoked meats or chocolate go side by side with stout. But beer pairing doesn't always follow these rules. Just as sommeliers experiment with pairing wines, brewers do the same with beer and discover unpre-

Bars, Breweries & Brewpubs:

Carlsberg Museum & Jacobsen's Brew House

- Exhibition, tasting and tours available
Gammel Carlsbergvej 11
Tel.: +45 33 27 12 82
Tues-Sun: 10am-4pm
www.carlsberg.dk - www.jacobsenbryg.dk

Ølbaren - Award-winning selection of Belgian, Scottish, English and Dutch bottled and draft beer, and has offer beer tasting "on demand"

2, Elmegade
Tel.: +45 35 35 45 34
www.oelbaren.dk

Plan B - Bar with one of the widest beer selections, more than

400 different kinds available
Frederiksborggade 48
Tel.: +45 33 36 36 56
<http://www.cafeplanb.dk>

Charlie's Bar - Offers wide variety of quality beer by independent brewers among them English, Danish and Belgian

Pilestræde 33
Tel.: +45 33 32 22 89
www.charlies.dk

Vesterbro Bryghus

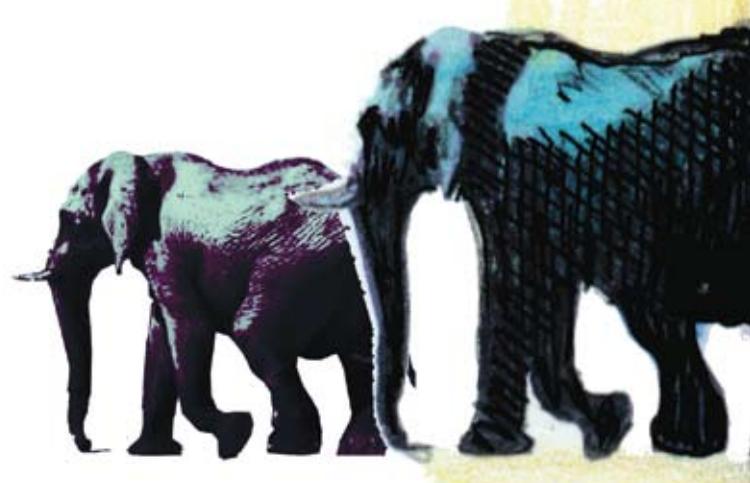
- Serves five different kinds of Austrian style ales
Vesterbrogade 2
Tel.: +45 33 11 17 05
www.vesterbrobryghus.dk

Bryggeriet Apollo - Brews pure beer, has organic food options and its own aquavit made from beer

Vesterbrogade 3 (Next to Tivoli entrance)
Tel.: +45 33 12 33 13
www.bryggeriet.dk

Færgekroen - Serves traditional Danish food together with its own Blonde and Amber brews

Tivoli Gardens
Tel.: +45 33 12 94 12
www.faergekroen.dk



dictable combinations that work like smoked brie with a stout Schwartz-style beer and fried shellfish with stout.

While at Nørrebro Bryghus, we decided to give a beer and food pairing experience a try. Our first course was foie gras crème brûlée with chorizo marmalade, and a scoop of New York Lager sorbet. This was paired together with brewery's Brugge Blonde, a lighter Belgian abbey-style brew with a slight lemony taste. For me, the reaction of the beer together with the foie gras increased the carbon dioxide reaction. This wasn't the case for the trained chef. We did both agree that the sorbet successfully served to lighten the richness of the chorizo.

The main course featured sautéed turbot with capers and a fennel tarte tatin flavored with Ravnborg Rød, a classic British Amber red ale. We drank the same beer used in the sauce and the ice cold, deeply refreshing taste was an agreeable combination with the salty fish, thickly reduced sauce and sticky yet extremely tasty caramelized fennel. We ended with chocolate fondant, elderflower sorbet and raspberries marinated in Bryghus' Furseø Framboise beer,

accompanied by La Granja Stout made with cold water extract of espresso coffee beans.

Overall, it was a satisfying gastronomic adventure and one that should be tried if you are a true beer enthusiast. If you do, I highly suggest you go on an empty stomach. It's no secret that beer is filling and there's no exception when drinking it together with rich, hearty food. It's easy to see why the Danes are taking beer into new frontiers and why beer has always been and will be a part of the Danish diet. So, when in Denmark, do as the Danes do. Raise your glass, look your mates in square in the eye, say skål and velbekomme or cheers and bon appetit!

