

Beer

By Justin Kennedy

These days, wine isn't the only beverage on the New York table. Craft beer is suddenly playing an important role at high-end gastronomic temples, like *Eleven Madison Park* and *Per Se*, where sommeliers are pairing custom-tailored beers with multi-hundred-dollar tasting menus.

The scene took on a new degree of intensity when, last spring, Evil Twin Brewing honcho Jeppe Jarnit-Bjergsø left his native Copenhagen and relocated with his family to Greenpoint, Brooklyn, to help open *Tørst*, a neo-Nordic temple to haute beer. The Danish expat's Scandinavian sensibilities permeate the space, with stylish teak wood tables set along one side of the room and an austere white marble bar along the other. On any given night, about a third of the 21 rotating draft selections—poured from a hi-tech draft system dubbed the “Flux Capacitor”—are dedicated to Evil Twin's brews, ranging from the evanescent 2.7 percent abv Bikini Beer to the inky, commanding Bourbon barrel-aged imperial stout, *Even More Jesus*. Other drafts come from acclaimed domestic and international microbrewers, like Vermont's Hill Farmstead and Cologne's Freigeist Bierkultur.

The expansive bottle list includes rare vintages from the likes of Cantillon, De Dolle and Drie Fontein. *Luksus*, a miniscule restaurant concealed in *Tørst*'s teeny-tiny back room, is where chef and co-owner Daniel Burns, who put in time at *Momofuku Labs* and *Noma*, churns out a \$95 five-course tasting menu of ascetic but wildly flavorful Nordic-inspired dishes, paired exclusively with beer.

While *Tørst* represents the upper echelon of beer bars, *The Jeffrey* offers similar quality in a more casual setting tucked beneath the ricocheting overpass of the 59th Street–Queensboro Bridge. Inside, behind the handsome dark walnut bar, co-owner Patrick Donagher, late of Midtown's original craft brew oasis,

Rattle 'N' Hum, and a current partner in Long Island City's *Alewife*, dispenses some of the city's best, and rarest, suds. The ever-changing lineup of around 30 taps recently included specialty brews like Omnipollo's Mazarin, a hoppy Swedish-take on an American pale ale, and Tilquin's Oude Gueuze, a bracingly tart blend of one-, two- and three-year-old lambics from Belgium. (Don't tell: The bar occasionally pours beers from California's Russian River Brewing, a cult brand not distributed in New York.) Ex-Vanderbilt chef Michael Haigh supplies beer-ready food, dishing out classics like fiery deviled eggs and a rich, griddled rare roast beef and smoked cheddar sandwich. Weather permitting, a roomy 65-seat garden is open out back.

There's also been a trend of bottle shop-cum-craft beer bars across New York City, thanks to a loophole in the state's licensing program—any bar with a “tavern” permit can technically sell beer to go. The best example of the sort is *The Sampler*, a slim space in Brooklyn's artsy-industrial Bushwick neighborhood, owned by Jorge Arias of *The Wine Hut* in Soho. By day, it's a quiet bottle shop and growler-filling station; by night, it's a bar bubbling with bonhomie and cheer. Growlers, for off-premise imbibing only, are filled from one of 20 draft lines that lean heavy toward domestic microbreweries; draft pints and flights are available to stay, as are large-format bottles and cans (add a \$1 “corkage” fee for in-store bottle supping). Recent bottled stand-outs have included Beachwood BBQ's robust Full Malted Jacket, a Scotch ale from Long Beach, California, brewed with heirloom varieties of Scottish Golden Promise malts, and the Bruery's White Oak, a heady but balanced blend of Bourbon barrel-aged “wheatwine” and Belgian strong ale. ■



The Jeffrey



Tørst



The Sampler

Photos: Tørst by Signe Birck