



# Romancing the Foam No. 111

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I stopped by the France 44 Cheese Shop (4351 France Ave. S., Minneapolis) a couple of weeks ago in search of an interesting cheese. Manager Katie suggested a Rush Creek Reserve from Dodgeville, Wisconsin's Uplands Cheese Company. I owe her. Rush Creek Reserve pairs particularly well with the beer I have chosen to review this month. It is a washed rind raw grass-fed cow's milk cheese. Vacherin Mont d'Or, a cheese made in the Jura region of Switzerland and France inspired Cheesemaker Andy Hatch. In Jura, the farmers only make Vacherin Mont d'Or in the fall and early winter when they bring their herds down from the mountains to feast on the

vegetation in the valleys below. Andy only makes Rush Creek Reserve from September through November after his cows' diets change from fresh summer forage to winter dry hay. Cows fed the rich hay diet produce milk packed with proteins and solids which is a choice milk for producing fine, soft cheeses. In the evening Andy pumps rich warm milk from the milking parlor to the cheese vat where he inoculates the cheese and adds rennet. After the curd sets, Andy stirs the curd by hand, and ladles it into cheese forms. The next day he brines the wheels of cheese and wraps them with spruce bark. Prior to wrapping, he has boiled the bark and soaked in in yeast and molds. The cheeses age for two months while they are periodically washed with a blend of yeast, bacteria and brine.

The minute you unwrap the cheese you know you have something special. A rich beefy, woody smell with some pine notes rises from the creamy, dusty crust. This is not a slicing cheese. You want it as fresh as possible and you want to carefully remove the top and then spoon it onto a slice of warm fresh baguette. You can speed the warming up by pre-heating the oven at 200° F and warming the cheese up for about 10 minutes. Depending on how decadent you are, it will probably take 2 to 4 people and a like quantity of beer to finish off a 12-oz. wheel.





Uplands Cheese recommends a Belgian Trippel to accompany this cheese and a Trippel would work great but the pine in the cheese's aroma has me thinking hops and I pull out a bottle of Boom Island Brewing Company Quadrupel Hopped Well Balanced Quad (10.2% alcohol by volume, 89 International Bittering Units). It is a Belgian Quadruple which the Beer Judge Certification Program Style Guidelines classify as a Belgian Dark Golden Strong. The Trappist versions (brewed by Trappist Monasteries) tend to be drier than the Abbey (not brewed by Trappists) versions. This leans towards the Trappist style. It has a rich, spicy nose. Anise stands out. Treacle, caramel, dark dried fruit, stone fruit and more generic fruit aromas support the spice. It pours brilliant chestnut with a mild ruby tint brown under a lacy 1.5 cream to light tan cap with a very fine bead and good retention. It has a mildly sweet spicy plum to peach start supported by dark sugars (treacle and caramel)

and dark dried fruit. Mild alcohol flavor is in the background. More malt comes forward in the middle with some traces of berry joined by a medium high bitterness and then it finishes slightly less bitter with some orange and orange pith. I have had this both in the taproom and from the bottle at home. I like the bottled version better because a) I don't have to drive home and b) the carbonation is better. The tap version's body is medium, and the carbonation is medium plus. The extra carbonation in the bottled version gives the beer a very creamy airy mousse-like feel. Alcohol warming in both is very mild. It creeps up on you very slowly and is a little less noticeable from the bottle. The Rush Creek Reserve cheese coats the mouth, the alcohol and carbonation from the Quadruple Hopped Well Balanced cut through the cheese's rich beefy umami flavors and texture but they leave enough of a flavor residue for the next sip. The beer foams up in your mouth and creates interesting new flavors as the carbonation attacks the cheese residue coating your mouth. The beer's bitterness, alcohol and carbonation balance the cheese's sweetness and richness. The spicy flavors in the beer combine with the meaty umami flavors in the cheese to evoke cured meat. The beer's spicy yeast flavors – especially the traces of anise – interact particularly well with the flavors coming from the cheese's spruce bark wrapping and the wild flavors coming from the yeasts and bacteria that have inoculated the spruce bark. The beer is smooth and very easy to drink, especially for such a big beer. I would rate the tap version 86 and the bottled version 90 and together Boom Island Brewing Company Quadruple Hopped Well Balanced Quad and the Upland's Rush Creek Reserve are somewhere at the far end of the scale.

Drekker Brewing Company is in Fargo North Dakota. I have had other beer from Fargo and it left me a little meh. I picked the 4-pack of Ectogasm (7.0% alcohol by volume, 85 International Bittering Units) up by mistake – the can design grabbed me – but it was a very good mistake. Ectogasm is a New England Style IPA brewed with oats to enhance mouthfeel and loads of Citra and Mosaic hops. Cracking the can



releases aromas of fruit, melon, citrus, tropical fruit, traces of biscuit, faint onion and garlic and a hint of bread crumb. It pours murky gold and looks much like a glass of fresh squeezed orange juice with the pulp underneath a 3" creamy white blanket of foam. A brief hint of caramel introduces melon, tropical fruit, citrus, and tangerine leading to a moderate bitter accent that lingers with the fruit. There is a very slight astringency from the hops on the finish and a very mild alcohol flavor. Hop fruit flavors are medium high, malt flavors are medium to medium low, bitterness is medium to medium high but well balanced by the malt and the fruit flavors. The alcohol provides very mild warming as you drink. Ectogasm is very creamy and pulpy with a medium high body and medium soft carbonation. The oats give it a very soft, rich texture. This delightful beer is very drinkable and repeatable. I rate it 84 and based on this beer I will

seek out anything Drekker brews. The creamy texture of the cheese and the beer go together. The spruce notes in the beer shout for an IPA and even though the beer lacks piney hops, the pine notes go very well with the beer's fruit flavors and bring out some of the beer's savory hop notes. They bring out the hints of onion from the hops in a very attractive way. Traces of saltiness in the cheese accent the beer's flavors and bitterness. While the carbonation cuts some of the cheese's mouth coating character, what gets me the most is how the cheese's meaty spruce flavors and traces of grass blend with the beer's bitterness and fruit flavors to linger long in your mouth and this linger builds as you continue to spoon the cheese on slices of baguette and wash them down with the beer. This is addicting.

I picked up my first cans of beer from Disgruntled Brewing based on my own frequent lapses into disgruntled-ness. Based on the quality and creativity of the beer – showing my Twin Cities chauvinism – I figured the brewery must be in St. Paul because I hadn't seen it in Minneapolis. It's actually in Perham and the last time I was in



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Perham I drove through on my way to do some work at Turkey processing plant. Their beer is very good. Lingerer (6.8% alcohol by volume, International bittering Units 68) is an American IPA that leans towards the New England interpretation. Citra and Summit hops are added after the boil either in the whirlpool or to the fermenter. This preserves the hop flavors and aromas while downplaying the bitterness. It smells of fruit, tropical fruit, orange, tangerine. lemon drop and bread crumb and something else from a long way off. It is a murky pour blanketed by 1.5" of off-white to cream colored foam with good retention. The foam marks each sip. Fruit, citrus and big orange flavors lead the flavors with malt emerging in the middle followed by an assertive bitterness followed by more orange and then a milder lingering pithy orange finish. The orange grows as the beer warms and a little lemon drop shows up. Hop driven fruit flavors are high, malt flavors are medium to medium low, and hop bitterness is medium dropping to medium low in the lingering finish. This beer takes creaminess to new heights as the medium low carbonation and the pulpy body combine to create a luscious texture. This outstanding flavor packed beer combines a rich malty orange flavor with a very nuanced hop bitterness packaged in an outrageously luscious texture. I rate it 90. You drink this beer with the Rush Creek Reserve for the same reason you drink the other two beers and for the same reason people serve fruit preserves on Camembert and Brie – only the beer is better. The cheese and beer build a layer of flavor in your mouth that lasts all evening. Both the beer and the cheese have mild sweet elements and elements that balance the sweet. The beer's big citrus, orange and tropical fruit flavors dance expertly with the cheese's spruce tinted cured meat flavors weaving into something altogether new while the malt flavors from the beer and the slight sour from the bread and cheese help pull it all together. This is very, very nice.

Of the three beers, the Boom Island Quadrupel Hopped Well Balanced Quad is the more elegant pairing. Choosing a Belgian Beer to accompany Rush Creek Reserve is a no-brainer and the cheese especially highlights the additional hop character of the Quadrupel Hopped Well Balanced Quad while the beer's big alcohol cuts through the fat of the cheese and enhances some of the Umami character. This beer suggests that the Rush Creek Reserve will pair very well with an American or a British Barelywine. If you can find some Rush Creek Reserve, pick up a baguette, head over to Boom Island, find a good spot at the bar and see how well it goes with the available taps – I am sure Kevin and Jim wouldn't mind. The pairing with the two New England style IPAs is more of sensual a roll your sleeves up, break off chunks of bread, scoop out some cheese and groan with pleasure while washing it all down with a delightful beer experience. I am sitting here wondering how this cheese might go with a big grassy IPA. If there is any of this cheese left, I know of a few Double IPAs, Belgian IPAs, and a handful of Brett beers I would like to try it out with. Rush Creek Reserve and these beers is the flavor equivalent of watching two people who know what they are doing, Tango. Next I will try these pairing with Astor Piazzolla blaring in the background.

Here are some links to reviews of other beers to try with Rush Creek Reserve: [Insight Terror Bear](#), [Fair State Spirit Foul](#), [Wild Mind DDH Northern Bloom](#), [Drekker Phantom Hand](#), [LTD Sleepwalker Triple IPA](#), [East lake Sun Dogs](#), [Toppling Goliath Pseudo Sue](#), [Cosmos IRA](#), [WarPigs Foggy Geezer](#), [Duvel Tripel Hoppiness Citra](#), [Stillwater Artisanal Ales Forgas](#), [Wicked Wort Mosaic Session IPA](#). and [Brasserie d'Achouffe La Chouffe](#).