



Romancing the Foam No. 115



Ducks. They make me laugh. I first gained an appreciation for ducks one summer in the mid-70s while living on a farm. We had steer (5), chickens (12), hogs (8), ducks (12) and a variety of cats and dogs. We had a large willow near the farm pond and large garden where I would often sit reading with a beer. Ducks would waddle over and quack at me – I suppose to determine if I posed a danger. The chickens and the ducks pretty much had the run of the place. Both would get into the garden in search of bugs. Chickens peck which makes a mess of tomatoes, squash, peppers,

eggplants and lettuce. Ducks, with their rounded bills snatch the bugs off your crops without damage.

Since that summer I have dined on ducks from time to time but never cooked with them. Then I ate at Saint Genevieve. I had a galette. A galette is a cross between a cake and a rich crusty pie crust. The egg on top made it special and after the first bite I call Amy, our server over and ask: “what is this egg?” It’s a duck egg. “Where can I buy them?” She has to ask the chef. He gets his duck eggs at the Seward Coop, a mile from my house by bike.



I have had chicken eggs – free range fresh off the farm, quail eggs, ostrich eggs and turkey eggs and duck eggs are the richest and tastiest. Duck eggs are a little bigger than chicken eggs, have a much bigger yolk and a harder shell. They have more fat, cholesterol, protein, and omega-3 fatty acids. They have a richer, more intense flavor than a chicken egg. They taste like you would want an egg to taste.

Duck eggs also address the issue of whether beer goes better with food than wine or even if you should drink

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beer with fine food. I got in this discussion with a wine drinker who enjoys beer but not with food. My response: try two sunny side duck eggs atop a salad lightly dressed with balsamic dressing over a couple of pieces of toast with a beer – I suggested St. Bernardus Wit – and with a wine.



At St. Genevieve I had Madame Tartine – Red Table Jambon Royal, Raclette Cheese topped with a sunny side up duck egg – with Unibroue La Fin Du Monde which goes with most of their menu and is a no brainer to order. It is a Belgian Triple-style golden ale that weighs in at 9.0% alcohol by volume which makes it a stretch for breakfast, but you hardly notice the alcohol. The hazy gold liquid has a slight amber tint and sports a 2” rocky white foam column that dissipates to a thick film that grips the side of the glass. It has yeasty aromas of over-ripe fruit, orange peel, honey and spice supported by rich malt. Yeasty and mildly sweet on the tongue the big fruit flavors featuring banana, orange, and tropical fruit seasoned with flowery spice play well with the rich egg, cheese and smoky ham flavors. The texture is big and

creamy with above average carbona-

tion, medium body and a little bite from the carbonation. The carbonation washes away some of the fats from the egg, cheese and ham but the flavors meld with the spices and fruit from the beer and coat the inside of your mouth lingering for hours in a very pleasant way.

For my first stab at a duck egg tartine I picked up a Rustica Bakery rustic loaf, some thick sliced bacon and duck eggs from food coop and the first fresh greens from my garden. Brouwerij St. Bernardus’s developed their Witbier (5.5% alcohol by volume) with Master Brewer Pierre Celis, the creator of Hoegaarden and Celis White. This pours very cloudy (cloudier than most witbiers) with a two finger thick head of foam resting on the top like a dollop of whipped cream. The aroma is not overpowering but you can pick up citrus, malt and spice. Like other Belgian Wits this beer is spiced



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with orange peel and coriander. Here the spice is very subtle, but it shows up more in the finish. The added spices are there but not dominating. The added spice and the yeast flavors balance well with the bread wheat malt flavors and the tartine. The spices and orange flavors accent the egg and bacon flavors but do not overpower them. The smoothness and creamiest of this wit complement the creaminess of the egg while the above average carbonation cuts the egg and bacon fat. It achieves a pleasant contrast of textures and contrast and melding of flavors. The result is an excellent and very enjoyable breakfast.



For my next tartine, I started with toasted Turtle Bakery sourdough bread, melted Raclette cheese, crisp thick sliced bacon, a small handful of fresh garden greens and two sunny side up duck eggs. I paired it with a Schneider Weisse Tap 7 Original German Hefe-Weizen (5.4% alcohol by volume). I have always loved this beer but pairing it with the tartine brought things to a new level. The beer smells like a wheaty clove banana bread and the clove aromas from the beer and the smoky bacon aromas and flavors of the tartine the beer immediately evoke the clove spiked baked hams that sat center table for most of the significant holidays of my youth (Thanksgiving excepted). Banana somehow complements both the creamy flavors of the melted cheese and the rich egg yolk while the beer's wheat flavors find a friend in the sourdough toast base. The beer's banana-clove combo paired with the bacon subtly evokes the rauchbiers (smoke beers) of

Bamberg. While the beer has above average carbonation, it takes just enough edge off the fat to make the bacon, egg and cheese flavors shine and the beer's creaminess ties everything together. The fat of the egg, cheese and bacon grab onto the beer's banana, clove and wheat and lightly coat the mouth, pleasantly lingering.

All three beers go very well with the duck egg tartines and show that beer can pair better than wine with some foods. Of the three, the Schneider Weisse Tap 7 Original stands out. Its rich flavors and creamy texture take the whole breakfast experience to a new level. Try it. You will like it.