



## Romancing the Foam No. 95

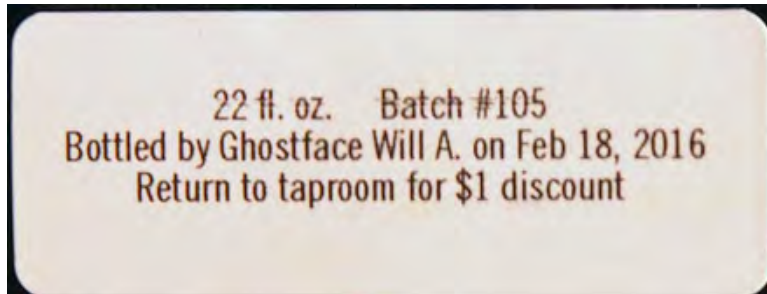
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Eastlake Brewery's Increasingly Lost Saison saved me during a recent meal at Le Town Talk Diner. It was the only beer on the menu that went with the food I wanted to eat. I biked to the brewery shortly after it opened in December 2014. I found a spot with a view of Lake Street. Brewer and founder Ryan Pittman impressed me with some of his interpretations of Belgian styles. His brewery is in the southeast corner of the Sears building – an art moderne gem built in 1927 at the cost of 40 homes. After Sears pulled up stakes and moved to the Mall of America in 1994, the city repurposed the building as the Midtown Global Market and filled it with internationally themed craft shops and food vendors. Ryan Pittman, a home brewer and a 13 year veteran Metro Transit Bus Driver drove past the building several thousand times on his route, gradually realizing that the Market needed a brewery and taproom. Ryan buys Clean Energy Partner Certified wind energy credits from [arcadiapower.com](http://arcadiapower.com) to power his all electric brewery. The brewery is small with a capacity to produce 600 to 800 barrels per year. The taproom seats 88 and on good days another 48 can sit on the patio out front. There is no kitchen but it doesn't need one. You can wander out into the Market and choose from a wide range of Italian, Mexican, Asian, Middle Eastern and contemporary food vendors and bring the food back to the taproom. Some vendors will deliver food to the brewery. On my visit on a January Sunday afternoon the house was about 60%

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full with a blend of Market goers, Phillips and Powderhorn Neighborhood types, brewer types with large biblical beards and non-spandex clad people who biked there. There was one guy my age sitting at the bar and a suburban looking shopper couple from the same demographic at a table. Everyone else was millennial. With my scruffy bike clothes I fit right in.



My dining experience with Increasingly Lost Saison sent me biking to several local liquor stores to collect Eastlakes' currently available offerings. I noticed something wicked brilliant on the bottles. Return the bottle to the taproom for a \$1 discount. In the early 70s I took an ecology class that studied

the environmental impact of returnable bottles, no return bottles and cans. At the time, no return bottles had the biggest impact, then cans. Our study found returnable bottles the most environmentally benign package. When the beer leaves the brewery, the bottle containing the beer is brewer's the most significant cost: 12 22 oz. bottles – before shipping – cost \$14.99 at Northern Brewer. From Buy our Bottles (BOB) a brewer can get a pallet of 1260 bottles for \$508.00. With shipping costs for a pallet of bottles around \$250, the bottles cost the brewer \$0.60 each. With this nifty move, Ryan gets his bottles back, improves the environment and attracts people to his taproom.

Ryan shows off his Belgian Brewing chops with his Shoot From the Hip Belgian Style IPA. A Belgian IPA has the Belgian Ale fruitiness and spiciness with a bigger dose of either European or New World hops. Many craft interpretations of this style disappoint. The brewers try an all malt version, don't understand the temperature requirements of Belgian yeast, under carbonate and a heavy hand with the hops ends up either masking or fighting with the Belgian yeast character. The Belgians add candi sugar – for digestibility – to lighten the body. Ryan understands this. With 8.5% alcohol by volume (abv) the beer approaches Belgian triple alcohol levels and acts as an excellent conversational lubricant. I have a two month old bottle. It pours brilliant chestnut with a light copper tint kicking up a finely bubbled 2" off-white foam cap that takes 3 minutes to reduce to 1/3 its original size. On both the nose and the palate the hops and the Belgian yeast character complement each other. Ripe fruit, plums, faint over ripe fruit and caramel aromas rise from the glass. Fruit and a trace of caramel lead the palate, quickly receding leaving citrus and a



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moderate bitterness with malt in the background. This is a yeast forward beer with a healthy hop accent. Tropical fruit and pear flavors grow as the beer warms. I especially appreciate that the beer feels like a Belgian triple. It is creamy soft and mousse-like with a slightly below medium body infused with slightly above medium carbonation. Shoot From the Hip is a well-balanced Belgian IPA where the Belgian yeast character and the hops work together and do not mask one another. I rate it 85 out of 100.



For our anniversary I bought a paella pan. It's a 13.5" diameter low pan from Spain and is big enough to make paella for four to six. I got mine from Amazon.com but you can also pick one up from the Kitchen Window. I don't expect Nancy to use it – I will make her paella. I first ran into paella in Geneva a very long time ago while visiting my friend Father

Bernardino Hernandez. Father Bernardino spoke fluent Basque, Spanish, French and German. Besides English I know enough German to find the right train, order a beer, obtain the bare necessities of life, and find a hotel room and a meal. My Spanish is about the same. In Italian I can cuss out a cab driver. My travel companion Don had enough French to read a menu. Father Bernardino solved our lack of a common language and lack of suitable space for two hippies in the rectory by connecting us up with a series of parishioners who worked for the World Health Organization as translators. One evening Arturo Aldama made us Paella and I have craved it ever since. I made my first paella the week of our anniversary with chicken thighs, Spanish chorizo, saffron, Spanish pimentos and chicken broth. Nancy and I got three dinners out of it and a lunch. The recipe calls for squeezing half a lemon on your plate of paella and when I read this a light went off – how would this work with a big citrusy IPA?

I grabbed an Eastlake Brewery and Tavern Dank Aaron Double IPA (9% abv) and the beer and the paella led to a beer and food paring "aha" moment. The beer pours brilliant copper under a sticky off-white 2" foam stand that takes 3 minutes to drop to 1/3 its original size. The initial aromas evoked damp basement, citrus and fruit



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with the citrus and fruit aromas becoming more pronounced as the beer warms. Tropical fruit, lemon and citrus dominate the tongue over light bread crumb ending in a bitterness straddling lemon zest and lemon rind. The bitterness is medium high, hop flavors are high, and the malt flavors are medium to medium high. Dank Aaron has a rich creamy texture and medium to medium full body.



Dank Aaron and the chicken paella move each other to a new level. The paella's saffron, chicken fat, olive oil and chorizo coat the tongue and palate leaving a pleasant spicy lemon chicken taste that lingers all evening. It elevates the citrusy flavors of an already good IPA to new levels as the hop flavors and the paella spices swirl together like ballroom dancers. The flavors of each truly enhance and complement each other. Day 2 I had the paella with New Belgium's Citradelic and day 3 with Lagunitas CitrusSinensis. While the interactions of each IPA with the paella differed, the IPAs all played very well with the paella. Together the three IPAs raise the question: "Why on earth would anybody want to drink wine with this paella?" Alone, I would rate Dank Aaron 85 and with paella, I give it a 90 or above.

Ryan's mainstay beers include a black IPA, Shoot From the Hip Belgian IPA, a pale ale, a brown ale and an American Adjunct lager. His rotating beers include a couple of Belgians, some sours, some imperials and some beers with interesting or unusual seasoning or ingredients. When you visit the taproom you are sure to find something that pairs well with the various food

offerings at the Midtown Market, something easy to drink while watching the street, or an unusual beer to try with friends.

As soon as the rain stops, Nancy and I intend to pedal down to the Midtown Global market, collect an assortment of international vendor food, cash in my half dozen or so Eastlake empties and spend an afternoon drinking Increasing Lost Saison.

Nancy's concluding comment: "Damn, that was some fine paella." If you want the recipe, email me at [pmulloy@romancingthefoam.com](mailto:pmulloy@romancingthefoam.com).