



Island beer culture amazing

Vancouver Island is the epicentre of the craft brewing industry in B.C.

This week, I had the opportunity to tour and taste eight island breweries.

Downtown Victoria has three breweries and two brewpubs each offering something unique to beer-savvy islanders.

Among the mix are Driftwood Brewing Company, Vancouver Island Brewing, Phillips Brewing Company and Swans Buckerfield Brewpub and Canoe Brewpub all within walking distance.

Minutes west of the downtown core are Light-house Brewing Company and Spinnakers Gastro Brewpub in Esquimalt.

To their credit, Islanders seek out craft beers at restaurants and pubs throughout town. They drink and think local. These great breweries all spawn allegiance.

In addition, Victoria hosts the Great Canadian Beer Festival (Sept. 10 & 11), B.C.'s largest beer festival that boasts 45 different breweries, mainly from the Pacific Northwest.

This event is the envy of every large Canadian city, or at least it should be.

Islanders have developed a sophisticated beer culture. One that Vancouverites could strive towards.

COLIN JACK IS AN OFFICIAL BEER AFICIANADO. CHECK OUT HIS WEBSITE JUSTHEREFORTHEBEER.COM

Sexy Eats – Diva Fridays

SARAH ROWLAND - Last week, we highlighted the kind of girls night out that involves hanging out with your BFFs and stuffing your feelings with comfort foods.

This week, we're highlighting the kind of GNO that involves putting on some sexy-professional glad rags and getting back up on that horse.

And one of the best nights to do just that is Diva Fridays at Yew bar in the Four Seasons.

Every week between 2:30 p.m. and 10 p.m., the warm lofty lounge offers special deals for dolls, including free sample-size appies for ladies sporting any kind of pink clothing.

The Peking duck & spring onion pancakes, lobster and mango rolls and daily selection of oysters with a variety of four different dipping sauces are all worth trying. But then again, so is practically every bite-sized dish on



Diva Fridays at Four Seasons offers a good girls night out.

FOUR SEASONS PHOTO

the menu.

Of course, you'll need a refreshing cocktail to wash that all down and Yew doesn't disappoint. There's the Diva Bubbles (raspberry and ginger sorbet), Feng Shui (vodka, grapefruit, pomegranate and

lychee) and of course no GNO would be complete without the classic Cosmopolitan.

As for the atmosphere, it's got a casual, but sophisticated, social vibe. Chatting someone up at the bar isn't out of the

question, but it's definitely not a "let's get laid Club Medesque" meat market.

So, if you just wanna chill with girlfriends at your table without getting hit on, you can. Totally your call.



Quest: Cocktail therapy at The Refinery

A visit to The Refinery is like a visit to a Mad Scientist's lab. Enter Raj and Fury and things that you've never dreamed about take shape in strange forms.

Fury: Doctor's orders – sling back a cocktail, now!

Raj: To improve health?

Fury: Lauren Mote is the first mixologist I know who owns a lab coat, and for good reason. She does much more than merely mix spirits.

Raj: She's taken the science of food and medicine and applied it to cocktail making. Voila! Molecular Mixology! It's like a trip to Dr. Bunsen Honeydew's lab from the Muppets.

Fury: You just want to be Beaker!

Raj: Well, we kind of were that night. Amongst the numerous drinks, two stood out. Except I didn't enter the bar like Beaker, mumbling "memememe!" What's he saying anyways?

Fury: Raj, focus. On our quest for the ultimate summer cocktail, we've encountered the good, the bad, and the ugly. I took a shine to L'Épice Verte where Lauren counterbalanced crisp, cool cucumber water with the essence of fiery jalapeño... and a good measure of gin for health, of course.

Raj: My vote goes to



Lauren Mote lights up the bar at The Refinery on Granville St.

Provencal, concocted with gin, lemon juice, and lavender-lilac syrup. It was like drinking a bouquet of flowers.

Fury: Another way The Refinery pushes the envelope is ...

Raj: Meat chips!

Fury: No, Raj, focus! Remember the strange flasks that lined the bar, like some

evil experiment?

Raj: Nothing evil about it. Lauren makes quality additives with everything from house-made bitters to a special cocoa vermouth.

Fury: The dehydrated mango chili salt that dusted the rim of my margarita was spectacular.

Raj: Meat chips and a cocktail to wash it all down!

Editor: Beaker, we're embarrassed you made the kitchen run a whole charcuterie plate through their pizza oven.

TIRED OF TALKING TO YOUR HOUSE PLANTS? HIT UP RAJ TANEJA (@TINHEAD) AND MELODY FURY (@GOURMETFURY) ON TWITTER. WE TALK BACK!

top 5

Sweet eats in the West End

In addition to a funky, laid-back vibe, Vancouver's West End neighbourhood also boasts oodles of tasty eateries and cafes. Here's five to check out:

KINGYO IZAKAYA

871 Denman St. A local fav, this Japanese gem delights taste buds. The sashimi is nice and fresh and the udon noodles are perfectly spiced. Try the sake tiramisu for dessert!

RAINCITY GRILL

1193 Denman St. With its beautiful dining room and stunning views, this fine-dining establishment aims to impress. The sustainable fare ain't too shabby either.

LOLITA'S

1326 Davie St. A cozy, vibrant little eatery with great Mexican eats. The tacos are divine and there's a variety of high-end tequila to wash it all down.

NOOK

781 Denman St. A low-key Italian joint with mouthwatering pastas and pizzas. And with affordable prices and good service, it's the perfect place to go into carb overload.

MIS TRUCOS

1141 Davie St. A lovely Mediterranean tapas bar that's made food critics swoon since it opened last year. Sweet Spanish cocktails – notably the homemade sangria – are an added bonus.

- KRISTEN MCKENZIE

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