



Brewing Beer with Chef Ingredients

BY BRIDGET SHIRVELL / PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEX RIVERA | AUGUST 03, 2018

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There's something a bit curious brewing in the South Bronx. Fennel pollen, Sumo Citrus, Szechuan buttons from a Long Island micro greenery and melt-in-your-mouth strawberries from California—ingredients you'd expect to see in high-end kitchens across New York City—are turning up in beer.

"It's a mind trick," [Bronx Brewery](#) VP of Marketing Patrick Libonate said of one of the beers, the Yokozuna Wit. It's a wheat brew in a Blue Moon style made with Sumo Citrus, a seedless sweet variety of mandarin orange, and Szechuan buttons, edible flowers that have a grassy taste with a tingling feeling. "It gives your tongue a buzzing sensation."



"The whole concept is doing something different than we normally do, like the flip side of the record, the B-track," Libonate said.

The first was the Yokozuna Wit. Then for St. Patrick's Day they did the Heavy Fennel, a frothy chocolate play on the classic dry Irish Stout where the use of fennel pollen added notes of licorice, citrus, and marshmallow. Available at the Bronx Brewery and select restaurants, the beers are limited editions, made on the 10-barrel system, which means once they're gone you're out of luck. But with a new brew coming up every three to four weeks and a plan to release nine or 10 by the end of the year there's always something new to try.

"It's an unusual partnership, but it's actually a really natural partnership as well," Libonate said. "Baldor has an incredible selection of fruits and spices, they understand the culinary world and have great ideas around flavor and trendy ingredients."

As part of their traditional sales materials, Baldor Food gives out a calendar to chefs that lists 10 to 20 seasonal ingredients per month that chefs can choose to order. For the B-Tracks collaboration, the Baldor team compiled a list of their favorite seasonal ingredients for the Bronx Brewery to consider.

The seasonality of the ingredients has at times already posed a challenge for the brewing process.

In early April, they were hoping to release Don't Kaffir the Reaper, a Gose-style beer made with Kaffir limes, which are known for being a smaller and a drier citrus variety, and pink Himalayan salt. The limes paired with the salt, they hoped, would result in a funky beer with a sour and salty taste. When Baldor's availability of the limes dried up due to a sooner-than-expected harvest, Bronx Brewery was forced to postpone, at least for now, that release.

"It's a tricky thing, the limes were available last year at this time," said Benjamin Walker, senior director of marketing and development of Baldor Food.



Despite seasonality challenges, Bronx Brewery has found that the richness of the ingredients they're sourcing with Baldor is adding its own story to the beers.

"The ingredients are a lot more interesting," Libonate said. "Take the My Berry Own IPA we're going to be brewing with strawberries. Other breweries will use strawberries but Baldor told us about these strawberries in California, how they truck them across the country and we thought, 'Let's make a strawberry IPA with the best strawberries you can get your hands on.'"

When we spoke, Baldor and Bronx Brewery were getting ready to release two batches of My Berry Own IPA, which had me dreaming of summer during that April snowstorm we had. The Northeast IPA made from a seasonal pick of [Harry's Berries](#).

"They're melt-in-your-mouth strawberries, retails for \$10 a pound and changes your perception of what a strawberry should taste like," Walker said.

Bronx Brewery and Baldor are currently working on lining up the ingredients for the next four beers they'll be releasing and while they weren't giving anything away yet, at the heart of each of the B-Tracks beers is the aim to create functional drinking beers for a great overall experience.



they share will create some buzz around the innovation and creativity that happening in the Bronx.

“We want to represent the Bronx well and help put the Bronx in the narrative that really cool stuff is happening here,” Libonate said.

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