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A malty Renaissance at Ted's Butcherblock

Old-world ale and food

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Ted's Butcherblock is proud of their monthly beer dinners. They've hosted them for over two years running. The food, beer, and atmosphere is anything but bland, and they get creative with it, as with a previous theme, Sticks & Stones, where Ted's showcased Stone Brewing Company beers and all the food was served on ... well, you get the point.

The theme for last Thursday's (Jan. 28) was the Renaissance with hearty foods and old-world brews, recalling a time when a bold fermented drink and a plate full of pig were man's greatest luxury. Historically speaking, we'd be more likely munching on stale bread and whatever small rodents let their guard down. But, appropriately, this was a meal fit for a king, all for a reasonable \$38.

Making it happen are Ted's chef, Eva Keilty and Charleston Beer Exchange owner, Scott Shor. They regularly work together to come up with pairings that fit the theme and tastes. But the beer comes first. For this dinner, Shor picked out four beers with old-world characteristics and flavors. Keilty focused on gamey meats and ingredients to highlight the beers.

To start was a smoked gouda and stout soup with a rabbit biscuit. It was paired with Dogfish Head Midas Touch, made from one of the first beer-like recipes ever discovered, scraped from barrels found in King Midas tomb. The peppery soup and spiced beer excited the tastebuds for what was coming.

The second dish paired a grilled duck and pork sausage (with fennel and juniper) with Maximator, a doppelbock from German brewery Augustiner-Bräu. The dark-hued beer has molasses and caramel flavors that knocked out lingering spice from the dish.

Arguably the best dish came third — a rye and cherry stuffed pork loin topped with a rutabaga hock reduction and local veggies. If they were eating this at the round table, they had it made. The dish was paired with Monk's Café Flemish Sour Ale. Aged in red wine barrels, the beer had an intensely fruity character, hinting lime peels and cherry.

After a short intermission, dessert arrived. In Keilty's words, it was an "obscene" malted honey walnut cake with Guinness caramel turtle sauce, paired with New Holland Pilgrim's Dole, a wheat ale aged in Kentucky Bourbon barrels with a syrupy start and malty finish.

The last course brought toasts to Ted's, his beer dinners becoming a Charleston tradition. It was a festive event, with music from Monty Python's Holy Grail and Ted acting, at once, as host and court jester.

Coming up this month at Ted's are weekly Friday night wine tastings and Ted's Food Trivia, the second Wednesday of every month. The events feature Spanish-style tapas and Ted as the emcee.

Tags: Beer, Ballard on Beer, Ted's Butcherblock