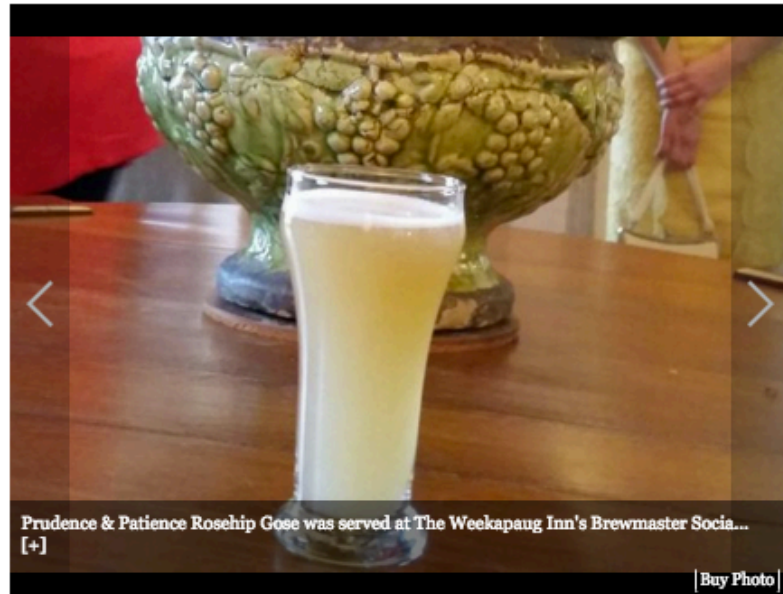


## Gail Ciampa: Weekapaug Inn pairs fine dining with R.I. beer

The Westerly inn is the first fine-dining spot to design a series that pairs its food with local beers.



Prudence & Patience Rosehip Gose was served at The Weekapaug Inn's Brewmaster Socia...  
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By Gail Ciampa

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WESTERLY, R.I. — For many years, the finest restaurants have brought in the best wines to pair with their food for special dinners. These meals both delight the palate and educate the diner on the beauty of complementary flavors and sips.

In the new food world, a few restaurants have promoted beer dinners, especially during craft beer weeks, when brewers travel to share samples of their work.

But we will now remember the Weekapaug Inn as the first to design a Brewmaster Social series pairing the local beers of Rhode Island with the fine dining at The Restaurant. The monthly series began in April and will offer its second on May 18 featuring the beer of Grey Sail with the cuisine of executive chef Ryan Murphy.

Not only does Murphy create dishes that complement the brews, the brewer is invited to share his/her stories at the dinner.



Chef Ryan Murphy at the Weekapaug Inn will prepare meals pairing local brews with his cuisine at The Restaurant for a series of Brewmaster Socials in Westerly. Courtesy Photo

I was on hand for the first midweek dinner last month when Bucket Brewery of Pawtucket was featured. Brewer Nate Broomfield is like so many brewers, unassuming and passionate. I truly believe he could not believe his beers were being featured with such elegant food. He told of how he had a career in information technology and was a home brewer when he set up Bucket Brewery.

"I thought we'd brew on weekends and sell it to a few of our favorite bars," he said with a laugh.

Instead he is running one of Rhode Island's fastest-growing breweries. But he is so self-deprecating, he said he doesn't know how it all happened.

He shared four beers with the food and a fifth one outside by the fire pit there on lovely Quonochontaug Pond.

I have to say I really felt I was part of something special that night.



Fazzoletti Pasta with black truffles, arugula, toasted pine nuts and Pecorino cheese was served as an entree with Bucket Brewery's 33rd Inning Red Rye Lager. The Providence Journal/Gail Ciampa

It began with hors d'oeuvres in the lobby of the Weekapaug Inn with innkeeper Simon Dewar. There was not a game of corn hole in sight. Rather there were vases of beautiful flowers and delicate glasses of Prudence & Patience Rosehip Gose beer. Bucket Brewery distributes their beer in cans with a bucket logo as a homage to the city of Pawtucket.

Many of the guests sat at community tables, which made for fun, lively conversation. The meal was billed as family style. But if that evokes an image, it is one far from what was put on at the tables in the dining room.

Each course came with three or four platters served among four or six diners. Appetizers included a smoked mackerel served with purple beetroot meringues, a spring vegetable salad with homemade potato chips and pork and littleneck clams served on a bed of saffron risotto. The beer pairing was B.O.G. Cranberry Orange Saison, which managed to taste different depending on the bite in your mouth.

And that is always the best part of drinking, whether beer or wine: how one enhances the other.





Beef Sirloin with Pommes Pont-Neuf and broccoli was served at The Weekapaug Inn's dinner with Bucket Brewery. The pairing was 33rd Inning Red Rye Lager. The Providence Journal/Gail Ciampa

The diners could have left happy and sated then but the entrées were even more impressive. The wild striped bass thrilled the palate while the creamy Fazzoletti pasta and black truffles satisfied the need for comfort food. Carnivores enjoyed a melt-in-your mouth beef sirloin with a cognac-peppercorn sauce and frites and a platter of meaty pork chops.

The beer this course was the rich 33rd Inning Red Rye Lager. The beer is an homage to the longest baseball game ever played, and that happened at McCoy Stadium between the Pawtucket Red Sox and the Rochester Red Wings. Trying to remember the year of the game sent several of us to our phones and we looked up shocked that it happened 35 years ago. It made sense of course, Wade Boggs, long retired, was on the PawSox then.

Beer and baseball talk, does it get better than that?



The setting at The Restaurant at the Weekapaug Inn where a second Brewmaster Social will be held for Grey Sail on May 18. Courtesy Photo

Dessert began with Bucket's exquisite Park Loop Porter, served with so many treats I can barely remember. But the Valrhona Chocolate bites and orange macaroons were so good with the beer.

Then we had a surprise in the form of a cheese plate. The cheesemakers at Cato Corner in Colchester, Connecticut, soaked one of their farmstead raw milk cheeses in Bucket's beer and let it age. It was served with candied nuts and local honey, and oh my, it was so delicious, especially with the porter.

After chef Murphy, who's new to the Weekapaug Inn this season, came out to answer questions, the crowd retired to the fire pit. I don't think anyone thought the \$75 dinner cost wasn't well-spent on this celebration of food and drink, all so locally inspired.

Brewmaster Socials will be held monthly, except for July and August, at The Restaurant, The Weekapaug Inn, 25 Spray Rock Rd., Westerly, (401) 322-0301, [weekapauginnevents.com](http://weekapauginnevents.com).