



## ***Beer 101***

BY JERRY ZEZIMA

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As the creator of Jerry's Nasty Ale, a home brew that goes down smooth and comes back up the same way, I know a thing or two about beer. I learned even more about it a couple of years ago when I was an apprentice brewer at Blue Point Brewing Co. in Patchogue, N.Y., where I helped make a batch of Oktoberfest without either falling into the tank or poisoning the product. But even I, a person who singlehandedly kept the beer industry solvent when I was in college, and who still enjoys a cold one now and then (now wouldn't be a good time because it is 8 o'clock in the morning), don't know everything about this popular beverage.

That is why I recently took a class called Beer 101. It was held at the Long Island Marriott Hotel & Conference Center in Uniondale, N.Y., and was taught by James Dunne, who teaches a similar class about wine called Vino University, which I attended last year and passed with flying colors (red and white).

I used to think all you had to know about beer was that it made guys irresistible to women (wrong); that it goes great with hamburgers (right), hot dogs (right) and Froot Loops (wrong); and that the proper way to drink beer is as follows:

1. Open mouth
2. Pour in beer
3. Close mouth
4. Swallow
5. Belch loudly

(Repeat until everyone leaves the room. Then you may pass out.)

Now, thanks to Dunne, an expert in such matters, I know better. The point of the class, which was attended by about 25 people, was to help beer

drinkers understand the brewing process; recognize the differences between lagers and ales; and appreciate the wide variety of flavors in both domestic and imported beers, which prompted me to comment, "This taste bud's for you!"

Speaking of which, the class began with a bottle of a popular domestic brew that is billed as "The King of Beers," probably because, after you drink enough of it, you're on the throne. "We will be making fun of that beer all night," promised Dunne, who added that we would be tasting 18 beers in all. I thought, "That's three six-packs!" Actually, Dunne noted, we would be tasting very small amounts of those beers. "It's important to drink responsibly," he said. "And, of course, you should never drink and drive." To cleanse our palates, and to put something in our stomachs besides beer, each table, which seated two people, featured bowls of walnuts, peanuts, pretzels and crackers, as well as small plates with chocolate bars and lime, lemon and orange slices. For each student, there also were 18 glasses for the different beers we would be tasting.

In my long and distinguished career as a connoisseur of the libatory arts, I have found that as guys get older, they often graduate from beer to more sophisticated beverages, such as red wine and brand-name laxatives. But Dunne, a sophisticated guy himself, showed us that beer also can be *recherche*, a French word meaning "to retch, especially after drinking too much beer."

In two hours, we learned that beer dates back to the time of Noah, who took it on the ark and, as a result, probably saw double, which is why he took two of what he thought was every kind of animal. We also learned about lagers, which are fermented at the bottom of a cold tank, and ales, which are fermented at warmer temperatures. And we tasted 18 brands of beer, including the aforementioned domestic brew, which Dunne did indeed make fun of; Corsendonk Abbey Brown Ale, a Belgian brew that was, in my opinion, the best of the imports; and two excellent beers, Toasted Lager and Hoptical Illusion, from Blue Point, the brewery where I helped make that batch of Oktoberfest.

At the end of the class, I could speak authoritatively, and surprisingly clearly, about beer. I graduated magna cum lager.

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