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BEER, HAPPY HOURS & MORE

Take a sip of *Goodlife's Peach Chardonnay Hybrid Wine Ale*

Story and photo by

JON ABERNATHY • For The Bulletin

The newest beer from GoodLife Brewing Company is a specialty barrel-aged brew released in bottles named Peach Chardonnay. As you might guess from the name, there is a wine influence, and the brewery is calling this a “Hybrid Wine Ale.” It’s a blend of barrel-aged saison with Chardonnay grape juice that is further aged in oak barrels before the addition of peaches.

It’s a bit of an unusual beer for GoodLife, best known for Sweet As Pacific Ale and its IPAs. In fact, it’s the second hybrid wine ale

produced by the brewery, after Pinot Beer, which was released last year.

To find out more about how Peach Chardonnay was created, I reached out to Director of Brewing Operations Tyler West.

“We started with a fresh growth of Brettanomyces (wild yeast) on our flagship Sweet As Pacific Ale,” West said via email. “Once we had a healthy ‘pitch’ of yeast we added four French oak wine barrels of fermented and aged saison. We again freshened up the blend with some more Sweet As wort, to achieve a highly attenuating strong fermentation.”

This base brew was blended with con-



Goodlife's Peach Chardonnay Hybrid Wine Ale is dry, tart and lightly spritzzy. This is a beer to sip on a summer night.

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centrated Chardonnay must (crushed grape juice that can often contain skins, seeds, and stems) and aged in barrels for a year, allowing the Brettanomyces to continue to ferment. “Brett” yeast is known for its signature barnyard and horse blanket characteristics but can also impart bright fruity notes including those of pineapple and stone fruit.

After 12 months, peach juice was added to the beer-wine hybrid to allow for conditioning after bottling. “We then ‘laid the bottles down’ for two months before releasing them to market,” West said. The longer bottle conditioning time allows for the yeast to naturally carbonate the ale and soften any sharp flavors.

The end result is 10% alcohol by volume with 13 IBUs. Peach Chardonnay is bottled in 500 milliliter bottles, and GoodLife provided me with samples to review.

The aroma is full of bright notes of ripe peaches with a distinctive light funk of the wild yeast, and a tart note that evokes white wine and a touch of oak. The fruit is lovely and fragrant, wafting up to your nose as you lift the glass.

It’s quite wine-like in flavor, with some peach skin and tannic oakiness; it’s dry and tart and lightly spritzzy, and I can taste the grape juice along with delicate peach for a

subtle sweet character that offsets the oaky tannins. Pairing it with an actual peach, the fruit softens the bitterness from the wood and it becomes even more wine-like — think of Chardonnay or Riesling.

All the elements are balanced well, and the end result is tasty and interesting. This is a beer to sip on a summer night, paired with fresh fruit and cheeses.

With Peach Chardonnay the second in this hybrid wine ale concept series from GoodLife following Pinot Beer, I asked West if there are plans for any others with different grape varieties in the works.

“We are constantly brainstorming and looking to build more relationships throughout the wine industry,” he said. “We would like to focus on wine harvest to work with vintners to source Oregon-grown grapes.”

In the meantime, bottles of Peach Chardonnay are limited and available at the brewery and at specialty bottle shops. If you’re a fan of barrel-aged brews or are simply curious about this concept of blending beer and wine, pick up a bottle or two to enjoy this summer.

■ Jon Abernathy is a beer writer and blogger and launched The Brew Site (www.thebrewsite.com) in 2004. He can be reached at jon@thebrewsite.com.