

Tastes to tempt the tongue at festival

COLIN JACK - Tonight at the 2010 Wine and Beer Festival, patrons will have the opportunity to sample three new beers.

My task was to ensure "quality control" before guests arrive and my palate was definitely up for the job.

JUNIPER BERRY "SAHTI" STORM BREWING (VANCOUVER)

This is last keg of this specialty beer from Storm Brewing. Delicate juniper berries produce a sweet floral aroma and faint berry finish that blends with the aggressive hop bite. A beer-geek's dream!

FISGARD 150 BAVARIAN LAGER - LIGHTHOUSE BREWING (VICTORIA)

Fisgard 150 was named after a lighthouse that welcomed navy ships for the past 150 years. Crisp and dry with a mild citrus-hop finish. Brewed for six weeks, this beer is clean on the tongue.

SEA DOG AMBER ALE - VANCOUVER ISLAND BREWERY (VICTORIA)

This is the only beer I will have to wait to experience tonight and I am anxious. Judging from my past experiences with VIB, I expect nothing less than an excellent amber ale.

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Sexy eats at Cobre restaurant

SARAH ROWLAND - Usually when you go out for Mexican food, you're stuffed on chips and salsa long before the assembly-line burrito gets to your table.

Not that there's anything wrong with that.

Getting that kind of bang for your burrito buck is great for festive family gatherings, long-term couples on a budget and single people looking to soak up a hangover.

However, it's not always ideal for a first date or a girl's night out.

After all, if you have to undo the top button of your pants at the end of your



Cobre's signature ceviche.

meal, you're probably not up for a hot night out on the town - but rather a night in your jammies in front of the tube.

Pressure is on Feenie to deliver in English Bay

DHARM MAKWANA - When Cactus Club Café comes to English Bay next summer, will servers trade their little black dresses for little black bikinis?

All signs point to no, as chain owner Richard Jaffray and chef Rob Feenie have indicated the new beachside location - green-lighted by Vancouver Park Board this week - will be an extension of the current brand rather than a dramatic reinvention.

Ramen Quest, Episode 3: The Emperor's Dish

Michael Kim, owner of SURA, is well known in the Korean community. I met him a couple years ago at his previous venture, Chung Dam Anh, a Japanese-Korean Izakaya-style speakeasy on Cardero Street.

If you weren't in the "know", chances are you never darkened Chung Dam's doors. Fast forward to today, Kim opened an equally mysterious restau-

rant on Robson Street, east of Cardero.

You may have a hard time locating a sign on this block that says SURA - the majority of their sign is written in Korean and has a small stamp and the word SURA on the side.

Back to the restaurant, it's an elegant 70 seater that serves up tasty Korean cuisine and sports a nice sake and wine list. The sundubu

That's why Cobre Restaurant (52 Powell St.) is one of the sexiest Latin-fusion Mexican joints in the city. This "kitsch-free" zone doesn't leave you feeling bloated and drowsy.

They serve up flirty, fun tapas that are perfect for sharing.

Everything is great there, but if you're a first timer, make sure you try the house ceviche. And guacamole lovers, make sure you order the White Corn Free-Range Chicken Taquitos.

You can pair your dishes with any one of Cobre's wickedly refreshing cocktails and then top it all off

with one of their to-die-for desserts.

And it's not just the food and drink that make this Gastown gem worth a visit.

The atmosphere is a little bit rock n' roll - in a low-key, classy sort of way of course. For example, the waiter who served our table had an Eagles of Death Metal vibe going on and the tatted owner/executive chef Stuart Irving looks more like a monster garage mechanic than a restaurateur.

And he plays the Stones on the sound system! What more could you want?

restaurant, can prove naysayers wrong and creatively flex his culinary muscle is at the concession stand included as part of the lease.

Perhaps resurrecting Feenie's Weenie, a cheese smokie topped with a bacon sauerkraut Choucrouste on a bun, would be on the menu.

However, that weenie chapter in Feenie's book likely closed long ago.

Still, the seasoned chef, who now accepts the con-

fusing title of food concept architect, needs to return to his irreverent ways to become relevant and make this stand a success.

Maybe all that's needed is a fresh take on fish and chips showcasing an Ocean Wise catch to gain acclaim as Feenie once did with his hot dog.

For diners, a return to culinary form would raise more eyebrows than any little black dress.

ramen they list is a spicy soup endowed with soft tofu, your choice of seafood or beef and of course, ramen noodles.

The soup is certainly spicier than any Japanese ramen I've had but that's expected with Korean cuisine.

The noodles are plentiful and at just under 10 bucks,



Ramen noodles

given the ambience, the unlimited refills on the complimentary banchan (side-dishes) and quality of ingredients, there's much value built in.

RAJ TANEJA IS PART TECHNOLOGIST, PART ENTREPRENEUR, AND PART FOODIE. HE RUNS URBANMIXER.COM, PUBLISHES A MISCELLANY OF HIS MUSINGS AT RAJ.JP AND CAN BE FOUND ON TWITTER WITH THE USERNAME 'TINHEAD.'

top 5

spots in Gastown

Historical Gastown has grown into a diner's delight. Here are the top five Gastown eats:

JULES BISTRO

216 Abbott St. This charming French eatery serves delicious eats at reasonable prices. Just a tip: Show up on time for your reservation - they're not friendly to latecomers.

THE IRISH HEATHER

210 Carrall St. Besides the variety of fine ales and comfort food, the lively atmosphere here is top-notch. A fun and friendly spot to catch up with friends.

JUDAS GOAT TABERNA

27 Blood Alley This hip new Gastown addition comes courtesy of the owners of Salt Tasting Room. With an open, warehouse-style décor and a menu consisting of mouth-watering tapas and small plates, it's shaping up to be the area's hottest joint.

BAO BEI CHINESE BRASSERIE

163 Keefer St. Chambar's Tannis Ling is behind this innovative new eatery, which takes a fresh look at Chinese cuisine. Check out the homemade ginger ale.

THE POURHOUSE

162 Water St. This cozy, historical-minded pub offers hearty, soul-soothing fare such as pork and beans and sloppy joes.

- KRISTEN MCKENZIE



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