

Peninsula **NEWS** R E V I E W

BC brews schooner tour

Peninsula News Review. Sidney, B.C.: Sep 7, 2007. pg. 5

Beer and boats are a classic West Coast combination: fishing trips aren't complete without a cold drink afterwards, and a day's sail over to Sidney Spit is completed with a cooler of brew for the guests. For anyone excited about the chance to taste hundreds of beers at this weekend's Great Canadian Beer Festival in downtown Victoria, Maple Leaf Adventures offers the next logical jump: a beer tasting tour through the Gulf Islands and around southern Vancouver Island on a century-old tall ship.

The Maple Leaf schooner departs on the Tall Sails and Ales trip out of Sidney and travels around the Gulf Islands, Victoria, Brentwood Bay, Nanaimo and other destinations on the Island's coast for a week while tasting 50 microbrewery craft beers. "It's really packed with education, and really amazing access to the who's who of brewing on the coast," said Maureen Gordon, Maple Leaf's marketing manager. The nine guests onboard get an introduction to the craft brewing movement during an overnight stay in Brentwood Bay, led by Paul Hadfield of **Spinnaker's**, which is currently the oldest operating in-house brewpub in Canada.

The Maple Leaf's regular crew, lead by Captain Kevin J. Smith, enjoys the addition of brewing historian Greg Evans for the duration of the trip. "Greg has a master's degree in brewing history in Western Canada," Gordon explained. "They learn about the social history of brewing on the coast, which is fascinating, because any time European settlers came to a place, one of the first things they wanted was to have a beer at the end of the day. A brewery was the first establishment on the coast."

Evans said that he brings along historic photos and artifacts from his own collection. "I touch on some of the more interesting events in our history," he said. "What our grandparents and grandfathers drank, the look of the saloons, rum running ... We had one of the first women in Canada operating a commercial brewery, Alvina Peters, in 1886. And in 1886 there was a brewery in Victoria called Carter Brothers that won medals at the Paris Exposition. Here we were, thousands of miles away from Europe, and our brewers were winning medals."

Beer connoisseurs will know that it's not just wine that needs to be paired up with specific meals; foods benefit from different brews, as well. "We have a chef onboard, and our chef will prepare meals that involve beer as an ingredient, and then they're paired with a range of beers as well," said Gordon. This is the first time that Maple Leaf has run the beer tasting tour in the fall [it's gone twice before, but in April] so Gordon said that they were aiming for a feast of fields theme. "There's a local theme for the food served on board," she said. An overnight on Salt Spring Island features a feast sourced entirely on the island.

The tour offers a chance to visit the entire range of tastes available from beer, from Swan's arctic ale, which Gordon described as very light and crisp, down to double chocolate porters and stouts. For some on the tour -- the beer aficionados -- that's

the appeal, but Gordon said that between island walks, sailing the 103-year-old schooner, and the opportunity for a learning holiday, the trip has a broad appeal. "There's enough variety for everybody," she said.

The Tall Sails and Ales trip departs October 25 and more information is available at www.mapleleafadventures.com.