

Over the past twenty years, marketing executive Mary MacIsaac has worked with (and sampled) some of the best alcoholic beverage brands in the world, from local beer & wine to international spirits. A lifetime of touring, tasting and sampling has resulted in a refined palate, a world of stories to share, and a bar second to none!

Editor's Note: It is an unfortunate reality that most of the small Ontario craft breweries are under-represented – or not available at all – at our local LCBO outlets and Beer Stores. So do start exploring the wonders of our local landscape to discover them. And put some pressure on the manager of your local LCBO to carry more beers, wines and fruit wines from small local producers.

Photograph: Gail Gordon Oliver



HALIBUT AND PANCETTA STEW WITH AMBER ALE, ROOT VEGETABLES, MEYER LEMON AND ESCAROLE

By Ezra Title

This recipe was created by Ezra Title, chef/owner of Chezvous Dining in Toronto, who has developed numerous recipes containing beer for Ontario Craft Brewers. Ezra used Old Credit Amber Ale in developing the recipe.

This is an extremely satisfying dish that is elegant enough for a dinner party. Make sure to serve it in large soup bowls accompanied by crusty artisanal bread, and provide your guests with soup spoons: they'll want to savour every last drop of the incredibly delicious sauce.

6 servings

2 1/2 lbs	halibut filet, cut in 1 1/2-inch pieces
1 tsp	kosher salt
1/2 tsp	freshly ground black pepper
1 tbsp	extra virgin olive oil
2 tsp	unsalted butter
1/4 lb	pancetta, cut in 1/2-inch pieces
1	medium onion, diced
2	stalks celery, diced
1	medium carrot, diced
2	cloves garlic, minced
1/4 tsp	dried thyme
1 tbsp	all-purpose flour
2 1/2 cups	chicken or fish broth
2/3 cup	amber ale
1	Meyer lemon or 1/2 lemon, juiced
1	medium parsnip, diced
1	medium sweet potato, diced
1/4 cup	whipping cream
1/2 head	escarole, washed and roughly chopped

Sprinkle halibut with 1/2 tsp salt and 1/4 tsp pepper. In a large sauté pan, heat one-half of oil and one-half of butter over medium-high heat. Brown one-half of halibut pieces, turning once, about 3 to 4 minutes (do not cook through). Repeat with remaining oil, butter and halibut. Remove halibut to a platter.

Reduce heat to medium. Add pancetta and cook, stirring often, until browned, about 5 minutes. Pour off all but 2 tbsp of fat. Add onion and remaining 1/2 tsp salt and 1/4 tsp pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, for 3 minutes. Add celery and carrot and cook, stirring occasionally, for 4 minutes. Add garlic and thyme and cook for 1 minute. Add flour; stir for 3 minutes.

Add broth, ale and lemon juice; stir well and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Add parsnip and sweet potato and cook until tender, about 10 to 15 minutes. Add cream and escarole and cook, stirring, until escarole is slightly wilted.

Return halibut and juices to pan. Cover pan and simmer gently until halibut is barely cooked through, about 4 to 6 minutes. Check seasoning and add salt and pepper, if required.