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living

'Gansett Bock is a go-to beer for spring

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Spring may never be more welcome than it is this year, and with the changing season comes fresh beer. It may be difficult to envision yourself sipping from a tall-boy on a patio amid the currently melting slush, but that time will be here before you know it. Just . . . a little . . . longer.

This week I'm giving you a go-to spring beer that won't break your budget. Narragansett Bock is one of several offerings from the iconic brand that will exceed your expectations of what a Narragansett beer can be.

You can now get several specialty 'Gansett beers in 22-ounce bottles, but Bock comes in the 16-ounce cans you're used to. That's good for portability, but just like with any beer, you want to pour it into a glass to get the full flavor.

Brewed in the style of a German Maibock or Helles Bock,



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Narragansett Bock pours copper into a large tulip glass. It smells of flowers, fresh cut grass, and bread and butter. I don't get a ton of hops from the nose of this beer, which is brewed with Northern Brewers and Hallertau varieties.

The first sip reveals honey

and some apple. There's a creamy, almost chewy mouthfeel here with good carbonation. The finish is a touch bitter, but at 32 IBUs (international bitterness units), it's more clean than puckering. Bock packs an ABV of 6.5 percent.

This is a very good example for the style, and it also represents an excellent value. A 6-pack of tallboys typically sells for \$8.49 to \$9.49. It's a good, solid beer to usher in the warmer weather.

Two events to check out

The New England Real Ale Festival (NERAX) returns to Somerville this weekend with five terrific sessions. NERAX is one of my favorite local events and is especially good for beer enthusiasts seeking to broaden their horizons.

"What is real ale?" you ask. Real ale is cask conditioned, completing its secondary fermentation in the vessel from which it's served. There is no ad-

ditional carbonation other than what happens naturally, and the beers are served at more or less room temperature. If you've been to a real English pub and passed over the frosted tap of Stella Artois for something more authentic, you've probably had a real ale.

NERAX takes place at the Somerville American Legion Hall, Post 388. You can find all the information you need at nerax.org.

Also, the Drink Craft Beer Springfest, a celebration of hops, takes place on April 5 and 6. The festival includes tons of local brewers. I've been to the first two festivals put on by these guys and have had a great time at both. Go to www.drinkcraftbeer.com.

The beer list for this fest looks awesome. Tickets are on sale now.

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