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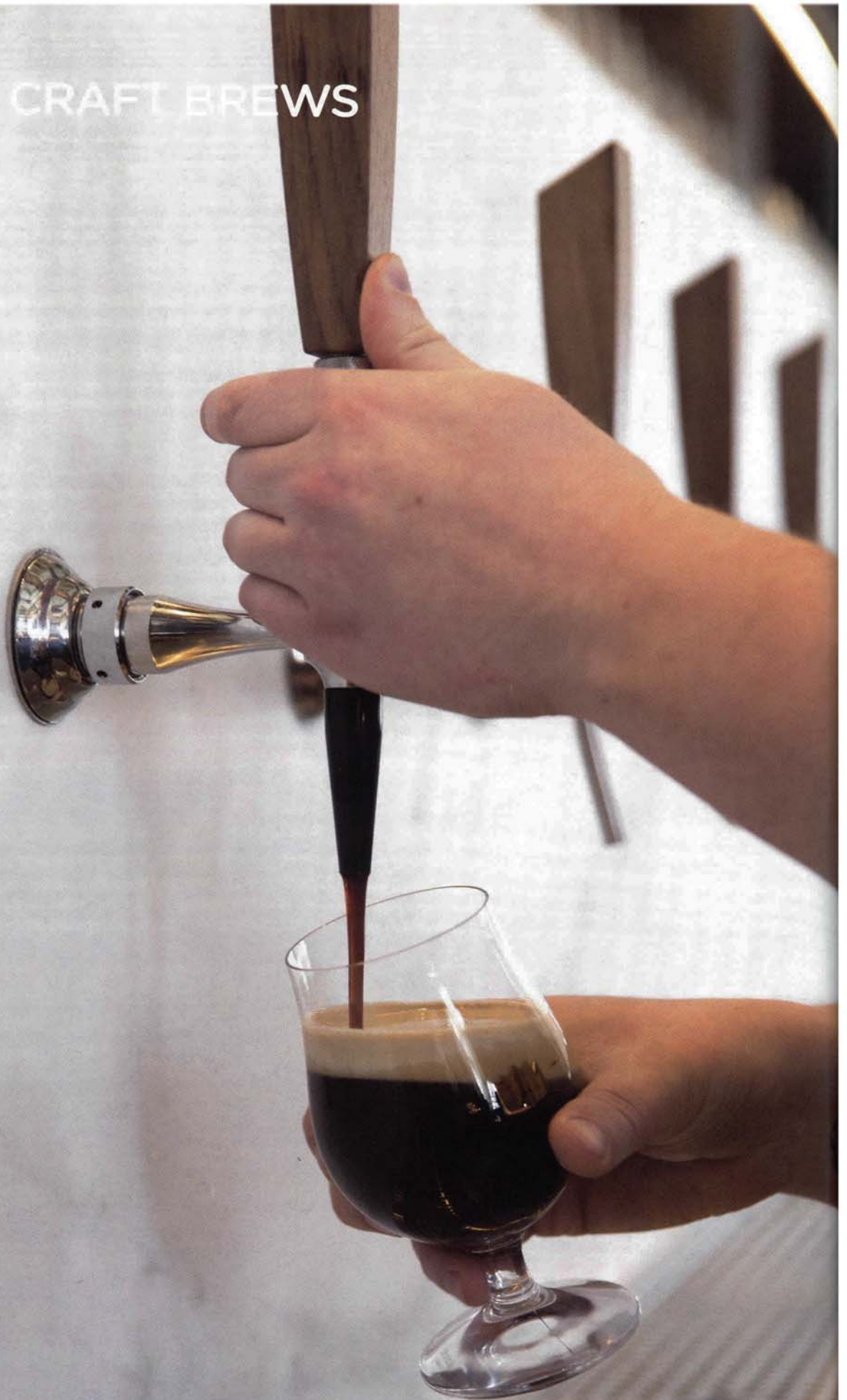
Spicy VODKA

A WHISKEY Primer

Wine Lover's Dream in Lodi, CA

Where to Sip: CROATIA to NEVIS

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Twenty Taps: *Beer-ing* at Branch Line

SIP For the Love of Drink sat down with Magellan Casto, beer buyer for Branch Line in Watertown, Massachusetts. We picked her brain on what goes into selecting craft draught options for the drink-centric eatery, how they pair with the Mediterranean-inspired menu, and the importance of craft beer as an integral fixture in modern gastronomy. —ROBERT BUSER



THE BRANCH LINE STORY

Branch Line is the second Boston venture of Garrett Harker and Andrew Holden, also dual kingpins of Eastern Standard. It is located in the historic Watertown Arsenal complex, just a couple hundred yards from the Charles River. The Arsenal is a Federal style building, listed on the National Register of Historic Places; the powerful exterior reveals a surprisingly warm and welcoming interior.

THE FARE

Items from the creative menu are each a masterful blend of comfort cuisine and vegetable-conscious fare. The variation in menu items, from a lightly drizzled snap pea salad to a succulent pork shoulder sandwich, leaves plenty of choices, and all invite perfect pairing with draught beers.

THE BEVERAGE

Draught beers originating from southern California to Sweden, to just a few miles from Branch Line's front door, fill the twenty-tap menu with variation. On any given date, you may find a farmhouse ale with a casual ABV of 4% or an imperial stout ringing in at nearly 11%.



SIP: You do the beer ordering here at Branch Line. What are the guidelines for beer you order? And what is the importance of a beer-centric menu?

Magellan: Well we can sell beer and wine only, so beer is basically half of the beverage program here at Branch Line. Andrew and I really love beer. We both love small breweries, small batch things, and supporting local business. I've been getting our staff into sour beers, my favorites, lately. There's a bunch of sour things on our menu, and I think 8 IPAs on right now. In the summer, everyone wants a citrusy IPA, which translates really well for food. Sour beers are like a cocktail. Whenever I go out to dinner, and I know that I'm going to have wine, I like to start with a cocktail, or champagne, or bubbles of some sort, and then transition to wine. Often I'll start with a sour as the "cocktail" before my meal. I have to admit that sometime I have sours for the entire meal.

SIP: You mentioned small batch and collaboration beers. When you're choosing a beer, what are some of the important factors to consider? Since this is for a restaurant, with a developed food menu, do you consider cost, rarity, locality, popularity?

Magellan: To be honest, I always love trying new things. I'm always motivated to try the new thing before I go for an old favorite.

As far as ordering, it's kind of a balance. You see what comes out, and you want to keep your beer as fresh as possible if you can. For any of the hops- the pale ales, you serve those as quickly as you can. But some brews benefit from sitting for a little while. With imperial stouts, you don't have to rush as much to put those on. But keeping with what's popular is something we strive for. There is some wiggle room there, though. They're doing so many interesting things with IPAs now. We had a strawberry-vanilla IPA, which is crazy and weird, but it really appeals to a lot of people.

SIP: Did you say strawberry-vanilla IPA?

Magellan: Oh yeah! Made by Omnipollo, a Swedish brewery. We've started pairing some of their stuff. They have amazing artwork and really beautiful bottles, and their beers are always really interesting. They definitely push some ideas, as far as their brewing. They have a whole series of beers that are very texture-driven. The Omnipollo IPA is brewed with oats, wheat and lactose sugar, so it has that creamy mouthfeel and a strawberry aroma. The vanilla provides a back end sweetness.

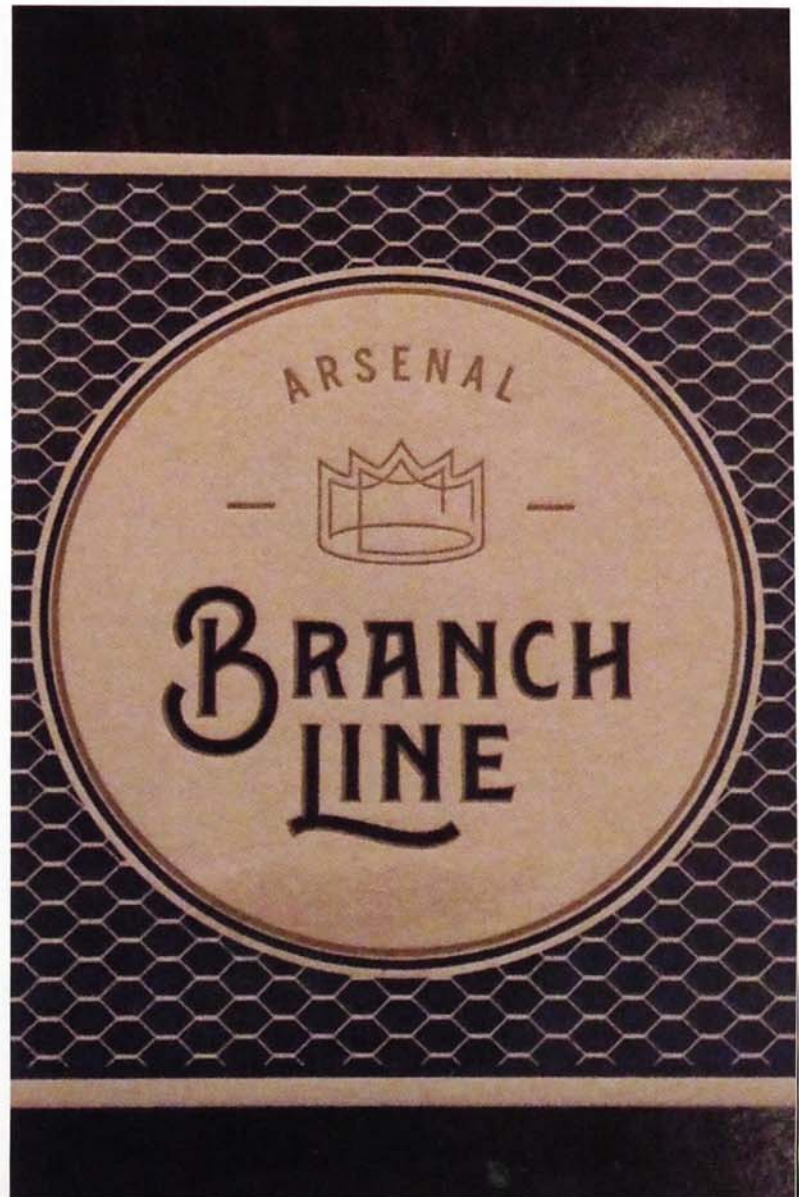
SIP: Do you ever take seasonal styles into consideration when making your selection?

Magellan: We did carry a couple of Christmas beers. I don't find that the winter, or spiced beers tend to translate well to food. We did carry The Bruery's 8 Maids a-Milking, which is an imperial milk stout. It's rather high in alcohol and just pairs wonderfully with

desserts. Our salted caramel ice cream goes well with anything dark and stout-y. We also had Port Brewing's Santa's Little Helper, another imperial stout. There have been some coffee seasonals that we've had as well. Overall, I'd say I do take everything into consideration, including seasonals.

SIP: Getting to the end and speaking of the desserts with imperial stout pairing, do you consider the adaptability or versatility of a beer when you choose what to order?

Magellan: Absolutely, one of my favorite things on right now is a spruce-tip Gose; it's a salty and sour beer from Grimm called Super Spruce. They actually forage for spruce tips! It lends itself to be very piney and citrusy, within the Gose that's very salty and tart. We have our salted avocado dish that comes with our marjoram vinaigrette and a little cheese with sprinkled salt. That dish with that beer is a match made in heaven. You have the salt on both sides, the tartness on both, but then the spruce, which shows through a little, giving it a light, refreshing taste that goes really well with that avocado. The spruce Gose would also be great with any of our fish dishes; it's so light and refreshing and versatile.





Our Favorite Pairing: The pork shoulder sandwich, with pairings by Magellan Casto.



Slow-Roasted Pork Sandwich

Pair with Wunderkind cider from Bantam or Jack's Abby Helles Lager.

FOR EACH SANDWICH

- 5 oz shaved rotisserie pork shoulder (recipe follows)
- 1½ cups chicken stock, hot
- ¼ cup grated kefalotiri cheese (or Pecorino Romano)
- 1 ciabatta bread, such as Iggy's
- 2 tbsp black pepper mayo (recipe follows)
- Lu's Cukes (recipe follows)
- Dill pickle, for garnish

1. Warm the pork shoulder in chicken stock; drain. Place the grated cheese on top of the hot pork and allow it to melt a little.
2. Cut ciabatta in half sideways; toast it and spread the black pepper mayo on it.
3. Top ciabatta with the pork and Lu's cukes. Slice the sandwich in half and serve with dill pickle.

Rotisserie Pork Shoulder

- 2 cups parsley, chopped
- ¼ cup garlic, minced
- ½ cup shallot, minced
- ¾ cup olive oil
- 1 cup canola oil
- ½ cup lemon juice
- 1 5 to 6lb boneless pork shoulder
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

1. In a large zipper lock bag, combine the parsley, garlic, shallot, oils and lemon juice. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Add pork shoulder

and marinate for 4 hours in refrigerator.

2. Remove pork from marinade, season with salt and pepper and place in a rotisserie. Alternatively, bake in a 325°F oven until the internal temperature is 145°F.
3. Let rest for 15 minutes, then chill in the refrigerator overnight and slice thinly.

Lu's Cukes

- 6 cucumber, thinly sliced
- 6 scallions, thinly sliced
- ⅓ cup salt
- ⅓ cup pepper
- 1¼ cup sugar
- 2 cups distilled vinegar
- 2 cups heavy cream

1. Put cucumbers and scallions in a bowl; mix with salt, pepper and sugar. Allow to sit at room temperature for at least 15 minutes to soften.
2. Add vinegar and heavy cream. Refrigerate until serving.

Black Pepper Mayo

- 7 egg yolks (pasteurized if desired)
- 1 garlic clove
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 qt canola oil
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Salt

1. Combine first four ingredients in a food processor.
2. With the machine running, slowly drizzle in the oil until emulsified. If the mayo is too thick, add a little water to thin out.
3. Season heavily with black pepper and to taste with salt.

