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## Business Sense: Hoppy birthday—beer and cake combinations turn heads

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**With the exception of cake**, nothing says “party” like beer. A Federal Way, Wash., couple who specialize in retailing rare and hand-crafted beers found a way to unite the two in order to promote their store, 99 Bottles. They turned to nearby Something Delicious Bakery, Kent, Wash., to provide the cake. The event's success suggests that wines aren't the only spirits suitable to be paired and cross-marketed with baked products.

“We made their grand opening cake a year ago,” said Monica Rohn, bakery manager at Something Delicious. “This one was for the business' first birthday.”

Tiffany and Craig Adamowski, owners of 99 Bottles, used their business's first anniversary to create a tasting event designed to show off different varieties of beer not as they stand alone, but in the context of other food.

“A lot of the higher-end restaurants are pairing specialty beer with higher-end items. Most people only equate beer with mundane chips and pretzels,” Tiffany Adamowski said. “We wanted to show beer's range and present it in the context with other common, everyday products. Baked products, like cakes and brownies, are perfect examples.”

The Adamowski's primary challenge was to sift through their beer selection in order to best match beer to baked product. A tedious regimen of trial and error (tough job, but it had to be done) ensued. “Honestly, at first we were excited at the proposition, but after several weeks of sampling, even my husband was grumbling, ‘ugh, cake and beer again?’” Adamowski said.

For the purposes of the birthday cake and beer pairing event, she settled on a rich chocolate cake with cream cheese filling. This was the most versatile backdrop on which to display a variety of suitable beers. She will be trying others, though, and is already penciling in a spiced carrot cake for next year's birthday cake and beer pairing. The Adamowskis have more baked product and beer events in their sights in the near future. After having stumbled upon a walnut blue cheese shortbread, they are turning to Outrageous Shortbread Bakery in Kirkland, Wash., to set up another promotional tasting.

Between local liquor laws and sales licenses, bakeries have a lot to think about when promoting their products with beer. But if a partnership with a local brewery or retailer broadens your market or a cross-marketing campaign gets people excited about your products, you might let the thought ferment for a while.

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