

805

LIVING

FEBRUARY 2010



LOVE,
Romance &
Guilty Pleasures

This page: Owner Cyrena Nouzille started brewing beer at home in 1999, until an explosion of a dubbel batch led her to believe it was just as easy to make 10 barrels as 10 gallons. Thus, Ladyface Alehouse was born. **Opposite page, clockwise:** Brewer David Griffiths specializes in wheat beers and ales; “gastropub” food includes Belgian twice-fried *pomme frites*; Ladyface’s Art Nouveau logo encapsulates brasserie style.

LADYFACE ALEHOUSE & BRASSERIE

Enjoy the rich tradition of a French tavern in Agoura Hills.



AH, THE BRASSERIE—a French style of alehouse built upon camaraderie and beer. It’s a wonderful model for a mid-priced restaurant, and the new Ladyface Alehouse & Brasserie in Agoura Hills does the genre proud.

Owner Cyrena Nouzille, who took her home-brewing hobby professional, lived in Paris for a spell. Her husband, Jean-Luc, hails from the Provence region of France and is intimately familiar with brasseries. Brewer David Griffiths supports the theme through his specialization of Belgian wheat beers and ales. He oversees the on-site brewing of Ladyface Ale Company’s Blond Ale and India Pale Ale; expect all 16 taps to be filled with Ladyface ales in the near future. He’s also chosen to serve beers like Belhaven Scottish Ale and Anderson Valley Brother David Dubbel along with wine and cocktails.

Ladyface’s interior has an open floor plan, which is warmed up with wooden cabinetry, tables, and chairs. A long communal table fills up quickly every night with large groups of friends or small collections of strangers who get to know each other as their meal progresses. Ladyface Ale Company is named for the Ladyface Mountain, which sits behind the restaurant and can be seen from the back patio. The menus and logo (to be etched on their grain silo) portray a lady illustrated in Art Nouveau style.

Chef Ray Luna (Patina Group, Spago, Shutters, Pasadena Brewing Co.) has crafted a menu that perfectly marries country-French brasserie fare with American pub grub to create a “gastropub” experience. “I had done an American brewpub before,” he says, “but it was missing a bit of panache.” Here he dishes up fun and indulgence in sophisticated packages.

At lunch or dinner, crispy Belgian twice-fried *pommes frites* (\$5) get sprinkled with one of three seasonings and can be dipped in decadent sauces, like aioli, a ketchup made with Red Ale, or even blue-cheese fondue. At dinnertime, the small plates section of the menu lists ale-battered fish-and-chips (\$12) and traditional Belgian *moules frites* (\$13) among other options. The sausage plate (\$12), available all day, comes with slices of soft pretzel bread and an insanely good violet mustard imported from France. It’s made with grape must (a by-product of the wine-making process) that lends a deep-purple color and a sweet



undertone to the condiment (8-ounce jars of it are for sale for \$16 in the pantry area of the Brasserie).

The niçoise salad (\$12) also shows up on both the lunch and dinner menus. It features local produce (as do all the salads and the daily slaw selection), fingerling potatoes, crunchy green beans, and perfectly poached albacore. The French onion soup (\$5), draped in Gruyère, is always vegetarian.

Sparkling water (free), lemonade (\$2), and French-press coffee (\$3) are available with meals, but this is a brasserie after all, so order a freshly pulled pint and enjoy. There's even a beer ice cream float (\$6) available for dessert if you request it. Now that's indulgent. ■

Ladyface Alehouse & Brasserie (29281 Agoura Road, Agoura Hills) will hold its grand opening on February 6; it is open daily from 2 p.m. to midnight Monday through Friday and noon to midnight Saturday and Sunday. For more information about Ladyface's prix fixe chocolate-and-beer-pairing menu for Valentine's Day, call 818-477-4566 or visit www.ladyfaceale.com.