

Happy Hour: Ale House trio veers away from salty and greasy, toward herbaceous and hot

Seattle's neighborhood Ale Houses all offer happy hour now, with a wide range of flavors and tastes in bar food.

By **Tan Vinh**

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Happy hour |

First came 74th Street Ale House, a joint venture by a bartender who fell in love with English pubs while kicking around in Europe, and a Seattle chef. Those guys, barman Jeff Eagan and chef Jeff Reich, paired craft beer with grub that was a step up from the usual greasy fare back in 1991.

Microbrews were featured. Bar food was neither microwaved nor deep-fried. Many veggies were locally sourced, all before "locavore" became a buzzword.

A following built up, and the guys opened two more bars, in upper Queen Anne and Columbia City.

Maybe you're lucky enough to live in one of these 'hoods.

All three offer happy hour now. It's not gourmet, but the food offers a wider range of flavors and tastes than the grub in your corner pub.

On Queen Anne, the chicken quesadilla was stuffed with pesto and cilantro. The seared prawns left a mild but lingering heat in the back of the throat.

Instead of salty and greasy bar food, these ale houses shoot for herbaceous or hot. Even the beer nuts are covered in curry spices but aren't salty. Hot? Yes.

The few happy-hour seafood items — prawns on crackers at the Queen Anne bar, swordfish bruschetta at the Columbia City bar — were highly acidic.

All to pair better with the microbrews — about 20 beers and cask-conditioned ales, mostly from Washington and Oregon. But here's all you need to know: They carry beer from Boundary Bay in Bellingham, which easily makes the best IPA in the state.

The three Seattle ale houses run happy hour Mondays-Fridays from 3-6 p.m. with \$3 beer, \$5 wine and \$3-\$5 bar food. Beer and food menu vary slightly at each location. Hilltop Ale House, 2129 Queen Anne Ave. N., 206-285-3877; 74th Street Ale House, 7401 Greenwood Ave N., 206-784-2955; Columbia City Ale House, 4914 Rainier Ave S., 206-723-5123. www.seattlealehouses.com

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MORGAN MCDOWELL

Chili Prawns are part of happy-hour menu at the Hilltop Ale House on Queen Anne.

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