

This beer sommelier reigns where she pours

CHRISTINA Perozzi came to Los Angeles to become a musician — “I thought I was going to be Norah Jones or something,” she jokes — but instead of musical fame, she found beer. The 35-year-old beer sommelier at Santa Monica’s Rustic Canyon Wine Bar and Seasonal Kitchen says that after working her way up the ranks at the famed beer-centric restaurant Father’s Office, she “geeked out on beer.”

“I was bartending, so I was in front of people and talking to them all the time,” Perozzi recalls. With her warm personality and husky voice — which frequently comes in the form of a deep belly laugh — Perozzi has a way of commanding attention at a table.

“I hate it when beer is dumbed down for Americans and especially when it’s dumbed down for women,” says the Illinois native. “This is beer’s time to come into

the fine-dining world.”

And at Rustic Canyon, Josh Loeb’s low-key bastion of seasonal, sustainably grown, high-class Mediterranean-style cooking, the dim overhead lighting, cream-and-forest-green palette, half-arched ceiling and quaint, private booths provide an intimate setting for Perozzi’s inspired pairings.

She might put chef Samir Mohajer’s seared diver scallops (with sherry dressing, lemon zest and salty, fried capers) on a dance card with De Glazen Toren Saison D’Erpe-Mère, an unfiltered Belgian beer the color of golden straw — the scallops’ lemon zest playing flawlessly off the citrus-y flavor of the beer.

Another Perozzi pairing might bring a cloud-like, flourless chocolate walnut cake together with Quebec-brewed Unibroue Quelques Choses Ale, served warm — the steam rising from the nut-brown beer rich with the



LAWRENCE K. HO *Los Angeles Times*

Christina Perozzi at the Rustic Canyon Wine Bar.

aroma of cinnamon and cherries.

It’s creative, spot-on combinations like those that explain why, as Loeb puts it, “Christina has a devoted following. When she’s at the bar, she has her own crowd.”

See Perozzi in action on Sunday at Rustic Canyon’s Winter Beer Bash, \$65 for five courses. 1119 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica; reservations: (310) 393-7050

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