

GOOD KARMA

FIND YOUR INNER PEACE OUTDOORS

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Written by Veronica Kawka

It's early morning, and the white puffs that so often cover the Pittsburgh sky are beginning to turn a dark gray. Yet, the outdoor girl in me is begging to be outside doing something, anything. I'm relieved that today is the day of the Edible Allegheny outdoor yoga photo shoot, where I'll be in the company of three of the city's most experienced instructors. With a quick look at the ominous sky, hoping the heavens don't open up, I pull my yoga mat from the closet and let the dewy air envelop me as I head out the front door. After a quick caffeine fix, I get to the park behind R.E.I at the SouthSide Works and am greeted by the three yoga goddesses in purple, stretching in unison:

Leta Koontz of Schoolhouse Yoga, Kristi Rogers of BYS Yoga, and Dominique Ponko from Yogaflow. I fight back the early morning yawns, happy to be here, and follow their lead into the Tree Pose and then the Warrior I, as the thunder begins to roll, but the heat of the summer swallows us all.

Warmer temperatures are actually more beneficial when it comes to practicing yoga. Heat helps our bodies to warm up easily because our muscles stretch more, allowing us to get into deeper poses. I do some research and talk to Kate Kill, another instructor, from The Himalayan Institute, who points out that the heat in yoga is very cleansing for the body, a perfect way to give ourselves that extra burst of energy during the day. Dominique Ponko of Yogaflow suggests letting your surroundings in because, "the universe knows you better than you do."

Whether it's raining or the sun is high in the sky, it's important to get out there and take the time to just "be quiet and still with yourself," says Leta Koontz of Schoolhouse Yoga.

And, that which is outside is also inside, or so ring the true words of the Tantra yoga philosophy. According to Kill, outdoor yoga is even better for the mind and body. "Being able to be outside and take a breath and take in the beauty of it is really good for the body," she says. "By appreciating being outside, you improve your relationship with the world.

Taking in beauty with nature makes you less likely to want to pollute it or yourself because you take a minute and recognize it."

It's also important to get out of our sterile indoor environments and get outdoors and put our feet in the grass, something many of us haven't done since we were kids. "Adults are inside too much and don't appreciate the outdoors. When was the last time you laid on your back and watched the clouds?" says Kristi Rogers of Breathe Yoga Studio.

With the warmer weather, our bodies need even more upkeep: We have to remember to stay hydrated and to drink lots of liquids, says UPMC's naturopathic counselor, John Laird. But, most people don't drink the right things. Many people opt to drink lots of water, but they may be missing the essential nutrients that water lacks. "Herbal teas and other cooling mint teas are useful, but fresh juices and the nutrients that are in the fruits and vegetables are also really important," Laird says. "And even the nonnutrients, the phytochemicals, that are in plants are just abundant in all the anti-oxidants. We're really just beginning to find out what all of their benefits are and how extremely important they are for our health." In fact, drinking too much water can even be bad for you. Laird describes a condition called hyponatremia, where those who are intensively exercising and drinking

excessive amounts of water can negatively affect their sodium levels. An easy fix? Drinking a sports drink will replace the sodium and potassium levels lost during exercise.

In all the chaos of daily life, we tend to overlook the things that really nourish us and keep us going, especially the natural and holistic options. “People tend to forget that what’s recommended to stay healthy is up to nine servings combined of fruits and vegetables a day, and most people don’t get anywhere near that,” Laird says. “Most people are in the neighborhood of one. So with all the fresh local produce available, people should make use of their local farmers and gardens. It’s a great way to get adequate vitamins and minerals.”

Locavorism, a lifestyle to which Koontz subscribes, is part of the Ayurveda, or “life knowledge,” yoga philosophy, where eating local fruits and vegetables that are in season keep our bodies healthy and balanced. We bend into the Extended Side Angle Pose, and the breeze picks up. Thunder rolls more deeply, and then the rain comes, softly at first and then escalating to a steady pour. We run for shelter, escaping to the Schoolhouse Yoga studio around the corner and finish up indoors. Our bodies are warm as we stretch into the High Lunge. It feels really good. I move back into the Tree Pose, steadying my balance and almost wishing I could be out in the rain again. That which nourishes us, that which sustains us.

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BYS Yoga, 1113 E. Carson St., Southside. 412.481.9642. www.bys-yoga.com Schoolhouse Yoga, 2737 E. Carson St., South Side. 412.401.4444. www.schoolhouseyoga.com

All Hopped Up:

HOW TO BREW YOUR OWN BEER

By Veronica Kawka | Edible Allegheny

“Pennsylvania is probably the best place to go for beer on the East Coast” says Ray Messmer of Barley’s and Hop’s Beer Café. There are more than 70 breweries in Pennsylvania, including one of the oldest and nationally recognized, D.G. Yuengling & Son, commonly known as Yuengling. With the summer months bringing in the heat, Sean McIntyre at North Country Brewing Company suggests choosing a refreshing local beer for tailgating, such as a wheat beer or a lighter ale. One of his favorites, The Slippery Rock Dew, is a honey ale. There are plenty of varieties to choose during the late summer because most breweries begin brewing their Octoberfest beer selections.

Although the experts at North Country Brewing Company are quite good at making beer, they recommended Porterhouse Brew Shop for home brewing equipment, ingredients, and wisdom. Brewing your own beer is “as easy as following a recipe,” says Ruth Whisel of Porterhouse Brew Shop.

Beer is made up of four ingredients: water, malt, hops, and yeast. The equipment will cost you around \$100 to \$150 dollars and the ingredients are another \$50 (to make about two cases of beer). However, the pleasures of serving guests beer that you’ve brewed yourself can certainly outweigh the costs. Porterhouse Brew Shop sells beer equipment kits and even holds classes starting in the fall to help firsttime home brewers. Whisel offers us some expert advice on the step-by-step process for creating our own home brewed beer. But we also call on expert Chris Meta, from the Three Rivers Alliance of Serious Home brewers (TRASH) and our friend, Eric Matson, who keeps a photo journal of every batch he brews at his home in Belle Vernon, to help us with this step-by-step guide for aspiring home brewers.

You Will Need: Stainless steel brew kettle (at least 6-gallon) + Airlock (device that lets carbon dioxide escape) + Two cases of clean, non-twist-top beer bottles Bottle capper and a package of crown caps + Thermometer + 2/3 cup dextrose Sanitizer (so the taste of the beer isn’t affected) + Racking cane + Siphon hose (6-foot tube that fits over the racking cane) + 6-gallon glass carboy (fermenter) + Funnel with strainer + 5-gallon (or larger) food-grade plastic bucket with spicket + Heat-resistant spoon (for stirring) + Grain bag (mesh bag to store grains)

Ingredients: Spring water (about 7 gallons) + 1 (11 g) package of dry beer yeast + 2 ounces of hops (choose preferred flavor) + 2 (3.3 lbs/can) cans of unhopped, liquid malt extract + 3 lbs. of grains (barley or wheat)

9 Steps to Home-Brewed Beer

STEP 1: Pick a Flavor

Choose the type of beer you want to brew, and then find the ingredients to match. Tim Santoro from Barley’s and Hop’s Beer Café recommends a wheat beer or pilsner for a lighter, refreshing choice. If you prefer something a bit heavier, try brewing a stout. Also, set aside at least two-and-a-half hours to make the brew, and sanitize all your equipment first.

STEP 2: The Boil

Fill the kettle two-thirds of the way with water, and put the burner on high. Put the grains into the grain bag and steep them in the kettle of hot water around 165 degrees for about 25 minutes. Remove the grains, and allow the

water to drip out of the grain bag. Do not squeeze the bag because this extracts tannins that will give your beer an astringent flavor. Bring the water to a boil and add the malt extract syrup, stirring occasionally, so that it dissolves completely. The mixture is now referred to as “wort” (pronounced “wert”) or raw beer liquid before it has been fermented using yeast. Boil the wort mixture for an hour, to ensure it is free of bacteria and to fully dissolve the malt extract.

STEP 3: Adding Hops

Add about an ounce of hops, or a little more if you prefer a more bitter beer, when the wort has reached a steady rolling boil. Boil for an hour. Add the “finishing hops,” about a quarter ounce, near the end of the boil to bring back an herbaceous aroma of the wort.

STEP 4: Cooling the Wort

Put the lid on the kettle, and chill in an ice bath in a sink or bathtub, but be careful not to get ice in the wort.

STEP 5: Sanitizing

Sanitize the carboy, funnel, siphon, spoon, and racking cane.

STEP 6: Yeast

Add the cooled wort (66-70 degrees) to the carboy using a funnel, and top it off with cold spring water. Stir the wort rapidly with a large spoon to incorporate lots of air into the mixture. Add package of yeast. Put the lid and airlock onto the carboy.

STEP 7: Fermentation

Keep the carboy in a fairly warm spot for eight to 10 days. Some recipes require fermentation for two weeks, so be sure to check the requirements depending on your ingredients. A day or two before bottling, move the carboy up to a table so that all the sediment can settle at the bottom prior to bottling.

STEP 8: Transferring to the bucket

Sanitize the bucket, and put in the dextrose. Transfer the unconditioned beer from the carboy to the bucket using the siphon. To siphon, place the carboy on a table above the bucket. Also, make certain the siphon tube reaches the bottom of the bucket to minimize splashing. Slide the siphon hose onto the handle end of the racking cane and put a clean thumb over the hose end. Invert the cane and plunge it smoothly into your carboy. Lower the hose end below the carboy and into the bucket. Try to avoid siphoning the sediment at the bottom of the carboy. Once you have siphoned all the liquid into the bucket, take out the siphon and racking cane, and place the bucket full of beer on the table.

STEP 9: Bottling

Place the bottle under the spicket and open it to fill. Repeat until you have filled all the bottles. Cap off the bottles, and let them sit at room temperature for one to three weeks to let the beer naturally carbonate. Chill before serving. Cheers!